

Arthritis Awareness

Living with Arthritis

No matter what age you are, arthritis can flare up and lead to pain that, in some cases, can be debilitating. It can attack almost any part of the body at any time and can last a few hours, a few days, or in some cases result in a chronic condition.

Arthritis is extremely common among seniors with nearly half of those age 65 and older suffering from some type of arthritis pain. But not all arthritis cases are the same, and different types require different treatments. The four most common forms of arthritis are:

- Osteoarthritis – This is when cartilage that pads bones in the joints begins to tear and wear away. Pain can range from stiffness to pain when walking, bending down or even sleeping. Osteoarthritis is most common in your hands, neck, lower-back, knees and hips.
- Rheumatoid Arthritis – This occurs when the body's immune system attacks its own tissue, including joints and joint linings, causing painful swelling. Over long periods of time, the inflammation associated with rheumatoid arthritis can cause bone erosion and joint deformity.
- Gout – It causes swelling and pain in your joints. Gout is considered a chronic disease, meaning it does not have a cure and will usually last your whole life. Gout attacks often happen in the big toe but can affect any of your body's joints like your elbows, knees, hands or ankles.
- Reactive Arthritis – Joint pain and swelling triggered by an infection in another part of your body—most often your intestines, genitals or urinary tract. Reactive arthritis usually targets knees and the joints of your ankles and feet. Inflammation also can affect your eyes, skin and urethra.

While each type of arthritis has its own treatments that are best, there are some general ways to treat arthritis.

- Daily Exercise – One way to prevent and treat joint stiffness and pain is to keep them moving. Walking, swimming, bike riding ... anything that keeps you moving can help.
- Strengthening Exercises – Lifting weights is a good way to build muscle. Strong muscles help to protect your joints.
- Range-of-Motion Exercises – Dancing and yoga are two great examples of this because they both keep you moving and improve flexibility.

Applying heat or cold to the area affected by arthritis may also help to treat it. Even soaking in a warm bath or heated pool can help. You can protect your joints by resting and eating a well-balanced diet. Also wearing the right shoes can help to protect your feet and lessen the strain on your joints.

If you've never had arthritis, but suddenly feel unexplained joint pain, you may be getting arthritis. Here are some other signs:

- Joint swelling
- Joint stiffness
- Tenderness or pain when touching a joint
- Problems moving the joint
- Warmth and redness on a joint

If you begin to experience any of these issues and they don't go away within two weeks, it's time to see a doctor. If you develop a fever along with any of those symptoms, you need to see a doctor right away. You don't have to suffer in pain.



ARTHRITIS AND FOOD

There are many foods that can ease inflammation and may help relieve some of the joint pain associated with arthritis.

Foods to Include:

- Fatty fish (such as salmon, mackerel, sardines and trout)
- Garlic
- Ginger
- Broccoli
- Walnuts
- Berries
- Spinach
- Grapes
- Olive oil
- Tart cherry juice

Foods to Avoid:

- Processed food
- Sugar and certain sugar alternatives
- Red meat and fried food
- Refined carbohydrates (white flour products, such as white bread, white pasta and crackers)
- Cheese and high-fat dairy
- Alcohol