
DEALING WITH ARTHRITIS

Seniors & Their Caregivers Can Strive To Lessen The Impact



arthritis

(är-thri'tis)

Inflammation of one or more joints of the body, usually producing pain, weakness, instability and stiffness. One of the most prevalent chronic health problems, it affects one in every five adults.

2 Common Forms

Osteoarthritis

A degenerative disease that breaks down the cartilage in the joints, commonly known as "wear and tear" arthritis.

Rheumatoid Arthritis (RA)

A progressive, crippling joint disorder. Most common in women, it is an autoimmune disease of unknown cause. Onset is typically between 30 and 50 years of age.

Easing The Pain

Work with your doctor to utilize symptomatic treatments that may include the use of heat and cold, physical therapy, massage, acupuncture, biofeedback and relaxation techniques, ultrasound, or TENS . Your doctor may also recommend the use of aspirin, over-the-counter anti-inflammatory drugs, such as ibuprofen, or prescription medications. In severe cases, orthopedic surgery, including repairing joints, removing a diseased joint lining (synovium), and artificial joint implantation, are options worth considering.

The Benefits Of Exercise

Regular exercise can also help to reduce pain and improve range of motion in joints affected by arthritis. The proper exercises help to strengthen muscles around the joints and keep bones and cartilage healthy by improving blood supply. Exercise programs should be used in conjunction with existing treatment and not replace medication. (**Note:** On the Arthritis Foundation website you can find local exercise classes -arthritis.org.)

Use "Range Of Motion" For Relief

The main sources of physical discomfort for those with arthritis are joint stiffness and pain. The appropriate movements can help to alleviate both. So the Arthritis Foundation recommends people move their joints through their full range of motion daily. There are many simple stretching exercises that will accomplish this without being overly strenuous.

Avoid Contractures

Another good reason to do range of motion exercises is that they help prevent contractures. This is a common complication of arthritis characterized by a shortening of muscles, tendons, ligaments, and joint capsules. Contractures make it very difficult to extend or straighten out a joint completely, and they can develop within only one week of inactivity. Another way to avoid contractures is to keep joints extended (straightened out) when standing, sitting or lying down.

(Source: Arthritis Foundation)



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