

LEARNING ABOUT ARTHRITIS

DISEASE MANAGEMENT BROCHURE Vol. 7, No. 2, 2008

ACCESS NURSING SERVICES

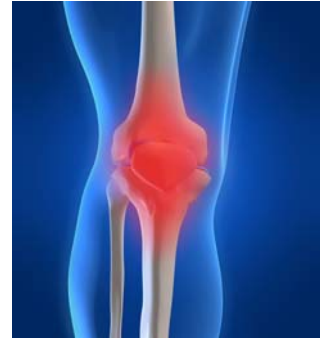


What is Arthritis?

Arthritis literally means joint inflammation, and it can affect joints in any part of the body. Joints are places in the body where two bones meet.

Cartilage allows a joint to move smoothly without pain. As the cartilage in a joint wears down, tiny pieces break off in the joint. These little particles cause the joint to become inflamed, so it produces extra joint fluid. The result is a painful, and swollen joint.

When the cartilage becomes too damaged, rough areas of cartilage or bone rub together. As a joint becomes more diseased, the bones may not line up right. This causes the joint to become deformed.



When a joint is painful, people tend to favor it by not moving it. This causes the muscles around the joint to weaken and shrink. These weak muscles won't give the joint proper support-causing more pain.

What causes Arthritis?

Generic Facts

- There seems to be a genetic link for developing Osteoarthritis, especially in the joints of the hands. Some people are born with defective cartilage which tends to break down easily.

Lifestyle

- Poor nutrition may be a factor in the development of arthritis.
- Years of poor posture or lack of exercise can contribute to arthritis.

Accidents, Injuries & Illness

- Some types of arthritis may be due to bacterial infections.
- People with diabetes have a higher risk of developing some form of arthritis.
- Accidental injuries- such as a dislocated joint, a bad sprain or a fracture- can lead to arthritis.
- Sports-related injuries can cause arthritis.

Anatomy of Joints

Cartilage

White, shiny material on the ends of the bones. Cartilage allows the bones to glide smoothly against each other so that it doesn't hurt to move a joint.

Synovial membrane

This tissue lines the joint and seals it into its own little capsule.

Synovial fluid

This is clear, sticky fluid inside joint. It is produced by the synovial membrane and it's the consistency of oil. The synovial fluid lubricates the joints and provides nourishment and oxygen to cartilage cells.

Ligaments

These tough, elastic bands of

connective tissue surround a joint to give it support and to keep it from bending too far the wrong way.

Tendons

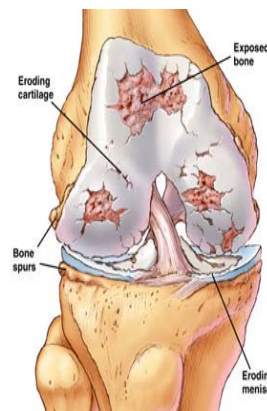
Tendons are tough cords of connective tissue. Tendons attach to muscles on each side of a joint and help control the movement of the joint.

What are Some Common Types of Arthritis?

Osteoarthritis(OA)

- Osteoarthritis is known as degenerative joint disease. It is one of the most common types of arthritis.
- With osteoarthritis, the cartilage in the joints breaks down slowly over time. After a while, the bones rub against each other which lead to pain and loss of movement in the joint.
- Osteoarthritis is considered a progressive disease because it gets worse slowly over a number of years.
- OA occurs most often in the hands, knees, hips, ankles and other weight-bearing joints.
- The symptoms of osteoarthritis are different from person to person, but everyone with OA has some wear and tear of their joints.
- Other symptoms include:
 - Loss of movement.
 - Pain with movement and sometimes even at rest.
 - Stiffness and swelling of the joints, especially in the morning.

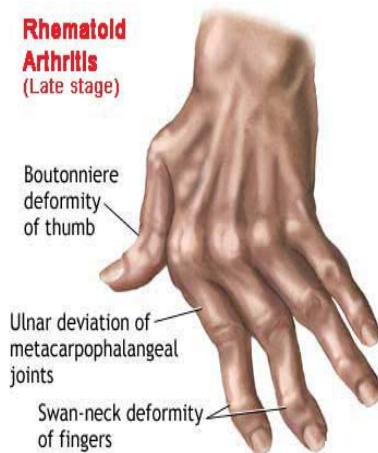
- Joint abnormalities like bone spurs, deformities and weakness.



Rheumatoid Arthritis (RA)

- Rheumatoid arthritis, known as RA for short, cause inflammation in the lining of the joints. Typically, a number of different joints are affected-on both sides of the body.
- In most cases, RA is chronic, although it alternates between painful flare-ups and disease-free remissions.
- The cause of RA is unknown. However, doctors do know that it is an autoimmune disorder.
- This means that the immune system of people with RA is out of whack. Instead of just fighting off bacteria and viruses, the immune system begins to attack healthy joint tissue. This causes the joints to become inflamed and damaged.
- Rheumatoid arthritis affects the entire body, so along with swelling and redness of the joints, some people have the following symptoms:
 - Loss of appetite and weight loss.
 - Lumps of tissue under the skin.
 - Fever.
 - Loss of energy.
 - Anemia.

Rheumatoid Arthritis (Late stage)



Fibromyalgia

Fibromyalgia is an arthritis related condition that causes pain in muscles, ligaments, and tendons-not joints. In fact, the symptoms of fibromyalgia do not include swollen joints.

Symptoms include:

- Fatigue
- Mood changes, in-

cluding depression

- Headaches
- Problems concentrating
- Numbness in the arms and legs
- Abdominal pain and bloating
- Alternating constipation and diarrhea

Gout

Gout is an arthritis condition involving the build up of needle-like crystals in a joint. These crystals come from excess uric acid in the body.

For some reason, the joint most often affected by gout is the big toe. You might also see gout in the knee, ankle, wrist or elbow. The symptoms of gout may include:

- Severe pain in the affected joint.
- Shiny, purplish skin around the joint.
- Hard lumps of crystals just under the skin. These lumps tend to develop in the outer edge of the ear, near the elbow, over the fingers or toes or around the heel.



Arthritis limits the activities of more people than heart disease, cancer, and diabetes.

What are the Side Effects of Arthritis Drugs?

The type of arthritis medication prescribed depends on the type of arthritis you have. Each medication had different side effects that you should keep in mind:

- **NASIDs.** (Aspirin or Ibuprofen) Common side effects include stomach upset, indigestion and diarrhea.
- **COX-2 Inhibitors.** (Vioxx) may cause stomach upset, especially if mixed with alcoholic beverages.
- **Chemotherapy.** (Methotrexate) may experience mouth ulcers, nausea and vomiting.
- **Steroids.** (Prednisone) may include upset stomach, bloating, increased appetite and weight gain.
- **Narcotic Analgesics.** Manages the acute pain of arthritis flare up.

Possible side effects of narcotics include: drowsiness, dizziness, nausea, dry mouth and constipation.

- **Biologic Response Modifiers.** (Etanercept) Side effects are minimal. But you might notice some redness and swelling at the injection site.

What is Joint Protection?



“Joint protection” guidelines help people perform ordinary, everyday activities without putting additional strain on their joints. Joint protection include:

- Asking for help. This is especially important when a task causes pain in one or more joints.
- Taking frequent breaks to stretch and shift position. This helps prevents joints from getting too stiff.
- Using assistive devices. There are thousands of different assistive devices available to make everyday tasks easier. These include things like long-handled shoehorns and large-grip silverware.
- Using good posture. This is important whether your client is sitting, standing or lying down.
- Learning new ways to do everyday tasks. If possible, an occupational therapist can help your client adapt their activities.
- Getting regular exercise including strengthening and ROM exercise. It's important for your clients to follow any special exercise plan provided by a doctor or therapist.

What can be done to Manage Pain?

■ **Medications.** Doctors prescribe drugs to help reduce inflammation and relieve pain.

■ **Comfort measures.** Items like special mattresses, splints and cushions help prevent pressure on sore joints. In addition, techniques like relaxation therapy, deep breathing and medication provide comfort to people

in pain.

■ **Rest.** People with arthritis need to balance the amount of activity and exercise in their day with plenty of rest. This helps prevent fatigue and overuse of sensitive joints.

■ **Coping measures.** Finding ways to maintain a positive attitude are very important to people who must live life a

chronic condition like arthritis.

How do doctors treat Arthritis?

Doctors treat arthritis by prescribing and/or suggesting a combination of:

- Medications
- Pain Management
- Nutrition



- Exercise
- Physical and Occupational Therapy
- Alternative Therapies (such as acupuncture)
- Surgery

How can You Help Clients Manage Arthritis?

- Remember that some days are better than others for people with arthritis. Don't be surprised if your clients can function pretty well one day and need lots of help the next.
- Remind your clients to change position frequently. Encourage them to stretch any area that feels tense or stiff.



- Keep in mind that people with arthritis may find easier to climb stairs one at a time, leading with their stronger leg.

- Check the fit of your client's shoes. If shoes are too small, they will put pressure on sensitive joints.
- Remind your clients to use the strongest joint possible to complete a task. For example, rather than open a door with their arthritic hand, they can push it open with a shoulder instead.
- Encourage your clients with arthritis to sit in chairs with arms so they can push on the arms when getting up.



- Be sure to balance periods of exercise and activity with periods of rest.
- Remember that some of your clients may have special made splints to help keep their joints in the correct position and reduce pain. Your clients may need help putting on and taking off these splints.
- Encourage your clients to use proper posture. This helps prevent additional joint damage.
- Remember that sleeping with only one pillow under the neck is best. More than that raises the head too much and can cause neck pain.
- Encourage your clients to use any self-help devices they

may have to help them bathe, dress or eat.



- If your clients are trying to lose weight to reduce the pressure in their joints, help them learn about serving sizes. For example, one serving of meat is the size of the palm of your hand. One serving of cheese is like a pair of dominoes. One serving of vegetable is the size of your fist.



We can protect joints from damage. These include:

- Maintaining a healthy weight
- Eating a balanced diet
- Getting regular exercise
- Avoiding excessive trauma and impact to the hip and knee joints.

Keep in mind:

- If you hear popping, clicking or banging noises when clients move their joints, they may have osteoarthritis.
- If you hear a sound like crinkling plastic wrap when they move their joints, they may have rheumatoid arthritis.



POST TEST

Please circle the best choice and then check your answers with educator. **You may submit this paper to your coordinator or send by mail to office.**

1. True or False

Because it is part of the normal aging process, all people develop arthritis as they get older.

2. True or False

Many types of arthritis develop because the ligaments attached to the joint wear out.

3. True or False

Osteoarthritis is a progressive disease that worsen slowly over time.

4. True or False

Rheumatoid arthritis affects the entire body—not just the joints.

5. True or False

Fibromyalgia is an arthritis—related disease that does not cause swollen joints.

6. True or False

Gout causes sudden, intense pain, often in the big toe.

7. True or False

Some kind of stomach upset is one of the most common side effects of arthritis medications.

8. True or False

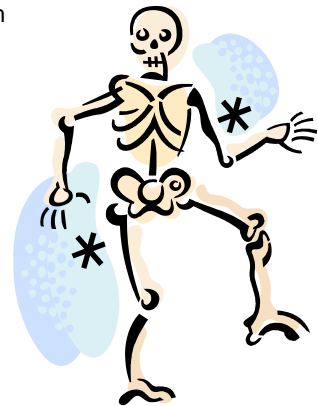
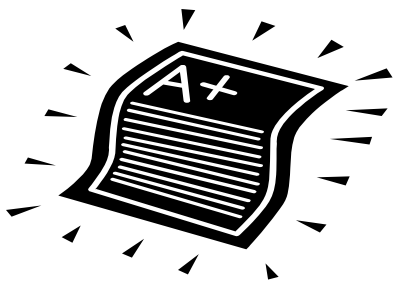
Range of motion exercises are more important than strengthening exercises for people with arthritis.

9. People are probably at risk for developing arthritis if they:

- A. Are overweight.
- B. Drink a lot of milk.
- C. Has measles when they kids.
- D. Crack their knuckles frequently.

10. To manage their pain, people with arthritis should:

- A. Exercise only once a month.
- B. Try to ignore their aching joints.
- C. Balance their activities with plenty of rest
- D. Move to some-place where it's warm and dry.



INSERVICE CREDIT: 1 HOUR	SCORE: _____
EMPLOYEE NAME: _____	TITLE: _____
EDUCATOR SIGNATURE: _____	DATE: _____