

Arthritis Wellness

Empowering Lives through
Knowledge and Support



Understanding Arthritis: An Overview

Arthritis is a broad term that encompasses different conditions affecting the joints. The most common forms are osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis. It is a leading cause of disability worldwide, significantly impacting the quality of life of those affected.



Osteoarthritis

Osteoarthritis (OA) is the most prevalent form of arthritis, primarily affecting older adults. It occurs due to the degeneration of the ends of bones over time. This degeneration leads to pain, swelling, and reduced motion in the affected joints. Commonly affected areas include the knees, hips, hands, and spine.

Symptoms:



Joint pain and stiffness



Swelling around the joint



Reduced range of motion

Key facts from WHO:



About **73%** of people living with osteoarthritis are older than 55 years, and **60%** are female.



With a prevalence of **365 million**, the **knee** is the most frequently affected joint, followed by the hip and the hand.



344 million people living with osteoarthritis experience severity levels (moderate or severe) that could benefit from rehabilitation.

With **ageing populations** and **increasing rates of obesity and injury**, the prevalence of osteoarthritis is expected to continue to increase globally.



Osteoarthritis is not an evitable consequence of ageing.

Prevention and control (source data WHO):

Several key prevention strategies have been proposed to prevent osteoarthritis and control its progression. These include reducing overuse of joints (e.g., related to workload) and promoting healthy lifestyles (e.g., regular physical activity, maintaining a normal body weight).



Rheumatoid Arthritis

Rheumatoid arthritis (RA) is an autoimmune disease that occurs when the body's immune system attacks its own tissues surrounding the joints. This causes inflammation, pain, and eventual joint damage. RA can affect people of any age but most commonly begins between 30 and 60.

Symptoms:



Joint pain, swelling and stiffness



Fatigue and fever



Loss of appetite



Rheumatoid nodules (firm bumps under the skin)

Key facts from WHO:



About **70%** of people living with rheumatoid arthritis are **women**, and 55% are older than 55 years.



13 million people with rheumatoid arthritis experience severity levels (moderate or severe) that could benefit from rehabilitation.



While rheumatoid arthritis is a systemic autoimmune disease that affects multiple body systems, the joints of hands, wrists, feet, ankles, knees, shoulders and elbows are most often affected.

Prevention and control (source data WHO):

Several key prevention strategies have been proposed to prevent rheumatoid arthritis and control the disease progression. In particular, reducing exposure to inhaled silica, dusts and occupational risks, and lifestyle related behaviors (e.g., prevention of/stop smoking, healthy nutrition, physical activity, maintaining a normal body weight, maintaining good dental hygiene) play an important role. Some evidence also suggests breastfeeding may be protective to the mother.



Managing Arthritis: Tips for Daily Living

Living with arthritis requires a balanced approach to manage pain, maintain mobility, and enhance overall well-being. Here are some practical tips to help you cope with arthritis:



Exercise and Physical Activity

Keep your joints moving. Low-impact exercises such as walking, swimming, and cycling are particularly beneficial.



Healthy Eating

A balanced diet rich in anti-inflammatory foods can help manage arthritis symptoms. Include plenty of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins. Omega-3 fatty acids, found in fish are particularly beneficial.



Pain Management

Effective pain management techniques can significantly improve the quality of life for those with arthritis. This can include both pharmacological and non-pharmacological methods like heat and cold therapy, massage and relaxation techniques.

Conclusion

Arthritis is a complex and often debilitating condition, but with the right knowledge and resources, it can be managed effectively. By staying informed, adopting a healthy lifestyle, and seeking support, individuals with arthritis can lead fulfilling and active lives. Together, we can navigate the challenges of arthritis and achieve a better quality of life.

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