

## MAY IS NATIONAL ARTHRITIS MONTH

### **What is Arthritis?**

The Arthritis Foundation reports that more than 50 million adults and 300,000 children have some type of arthritis in the United States. Arthritis is a term that describes over 100 different diseases or conditions. These diseases can affect muscles, bones, and joints. Symptoms include pain, aching, stiffness, and swelling in or around the joints. It occurs more frequently in women and in the elderly. Still, it can affect people of all ages, genders, and races. The two most common types of arthritis are osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis. Other forms include fibromyalgia, gout, and psoriatic arthritis.

### **Osteoarthritis (OA)**

OA is the most common type of chronic joint disease. According to the Arthritis Foundation, approximately 27 million Americans are affected. Pain and symptoms of OA occur when cartilage breaks down or wears away. Cartilage is the rubbery material that acts as a cushion between bones. OA is typically caused from wear and tear of the joint or as a result of an injury. OA frequently affects weight-bearing joints, such as the knees, hips, and back. Risk factors include increasing age, obesity, overuse of the joint, and physical inactivity.

### **Rheumatoid Arthritis (RA)**

RA is an autoimmune disease. This means that the body's own immune system mistakenly "attacks" its own tissues. Pain and symptoms of RA occur when the immune system attacks the tissue that makes fluid to lubricate joints. Researchers do not fully understand why people get RA. Factors that may contribute to the disease are genetic, hormonal, and environmental. Per the Arthritis Foundation, about 1.5 million people Americans have RA. It usually begins between the ages of 30 and 60. Commonly, it affects symmetrical joints. These joints include the hands, feet, wrists, knees, and ankles. Medications are used to slow or stop the course of disease and prevent further damage of the joints.

### **Treatment of Arthritis**

Medicinal treatment for arthritis varies. Thus, the medications are specific to the disease they are treating. Some common medications include:

- pain relievers (e.g. acetaminophen, ibuprofen)
- corticosteroids
- hyaluronic acid
- disease-modifying anti-rheumatic drugs (DMARDs)
- nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs)

### **Exercise and Diet**

**Exercise:** The American College of Rheumatology recommends that everyone should exercise! While it may be challenging to exercise when your joints hurt, regular physical activity is important. Exercise can assist in relieving pain and maintaining function. Studies have shown that people with arthritis who exercise regularly have less pain and more energy. Additionally, they may experience improved sleep and better day-to-day function. People with arthritis should try to get at least 150 minutes of moderate intensity activity each week. In general, these types of exercises should be included:

- **Strength straining** builds strong muscles around affected joints. This helps ease the pressure off the joints and reduce pain. This can be done through lifting weights, using resistance bands, or body weight exercises.
- **Range-of-motion exercise** helps maintain or improve flexibility and reduce stiffness. Examples include stretching, yoga, or tai chi.
- **Aerobic exercise** improves stamina and energy levels. This can also help attain a healthy weight. Examples of this includes any activity that makes you breathe harder and your heart beat faster. These activities include swimming, heavy yard work, brisk walking, and dancing.

**Diet:** Certain foods have been shown to fight inflammation, strengthen bones, and boost the immune system. Along with a balanced diet, these foods may help ease the symptoms of arthritis. See below for food suggestions recommended by the Arthritis Foundation.

<b>Beneficial Foods</b>	<b>May Help With...</b>
Omega-3-rich fish (salmon, tuna, mackerel)	RA
Soybeans (tofu or edamame)	RA
Whole grains (brown rice, oatmeal)	RA
Beans (red beans, kidney beans, pinto beans)	RA
Broccoli	OA
Garlic, onions, and leeks	OA
Low-fat dairy (milk, yogurt, cheese)	OA
Nuts (walnuts, pine nuts, pistachios, almonds)	RA and OA
Healthy fats (avocado, safflower oil, walnut oil)	RA and OA
Green tea	RA and OA
Citrus fruits (oranges, limes, grapefruits)	RA and OA

### **Remember!!**

*It is important to speak with your physician to determine the best possible treatment course for you or before starting a diet and exercise regimen.*

For informational purposes only; not meant to supersede the advice of a physician.  
If you have questions regarding this information, please consult your medical professional.