

Healthy Habits

May 2008

Tips for reaching and maintaining your optimum state of health

May is National Arthritis Awareness Month

Most people know that arthritis can be a very painful and debilitating condition. What many fail to realize, however, is that arthritis is not just a health concern for senior citizens. Arthritis and chronic joint symptoms affect nearly 46 million Americans, or about one of every five adults, making it one of the most prevalent diseases in the United States.

Understanding Arthritis

The term arthritis actually refers to more than 100 different diseases that affect the joints and tissues around the joints. Some of these diseases can also affect other parts of the body, including the skin and internal organs.

Arthritis causes stiffness, pain and joint swelling. The severity is different from person to person, and even from day to day. In some people, only a few joints are affected. In others, many different areas in the body may be affected. Arthritis can be chronic, which means it can last from weeks to years and may last the rest of one's life.

Dispelling the myths

Myth 1: If I am under age 65, arthritis shouldn't concern me.

FALSE. While half of all seniors *do* report arthritis symptoms, the largest number of people with arthritis are actually in the 45 to 65 age group. There are also 8.4 million people between the ages of 18 and 44 with arthritis and nearly 300,000 children living with juvenile arthritis. It's important to realize that we are all at risk and not just later in life. If you don't have arthritis, there are measures you should be taking now to stay that way.



Arthritis affects about 1 in 5 adults but doesn't have to keep you from an active lifestyle. See www.arthritis.org or www.cdc.gov for the latest information.

Myth 2: Once I have joint pain or arthritis there is nothing that can be done about it.

FALSE. Recent reports state over 23 million people report arthritis symptoms but have still never seen a doctor for help. If you have, or think you have arthritis, there are steps you can take to manage it. Your healthcare provider can help you determine your level of joint health and develop a plan of treatment for you. The earlier that symptoms are diagnosed, the better prepared you'll be to stop or slow down progression of the disease.

How can I fight back?

Pain, stiffness or swelling in or around a joint for more than two weeks is an early warning sign of arthritis. If you notice these signs, see your doctor. Early medical care, an exercise plan and treatment can make a difference in how arthritis affects your daily activities. It is important to learn about your condition and play an active role in your care. Don't let arthritis take you out of the game.

The material contained in Healthy Habits is not intended to be medical advice on any particular matter. Readers should seek appropriate professional advice before acting on the basis of any information contained in this publication. This information is provided courtesy of Optima Health.