

The Ache of Arthritis

On any given day, which health condition keeps the largest number of people sitting on the sidelines? The pain and stiffness of arthritis.



Arthritis makes its home in your body's joints – right where two bones meet. It damages cartilage, which acts as a shock absorber and helps you bend and move easily. In fact, it's one of your bones' and joints' best friends. Arthritis, however, is not. It keeps your cartilage from giving you that cushion.

Arthritis comes in many forms:

- *Osteoarthritis* – Can happen at any age, but it's most common in people over 65. Osteoarthritis is brought on by overuse or getting older, causing your cartilage to break down or wear away. It can affect just one joint or several, often in the lower back, knees, hips, feet, fingers and hands.
- *Rheumatoid arthritis* – Happens when your immune system – whose job it is to destroy viruses and bacteria – gets confused and attacks cartilage. Symptoms usually include swelling, pain and warmth around the joint. You may have trouble moving the joint. You may feel tired, lose your appetite or even have a fever.
- *Gout* – The first sign of gout may be sudden redness, swelling and pain in your big toe in the middle of the night. It may also cause pain in your feet, ankles or knees.
- *Fibromyalgia* – Flu-like tiredness, deep muscle pain and body aches are three common symptoms of this disease. The difference between this and other forms of arthritis is that it's more widespread through your entire body.
- *Lupus* – This is another case of your immune system attacking your body's organs instead of diseases. Along with the pain, you may feel constantly tired or have a rash, fever, mouth sores or hair loss. Over time, it may cause problems with your heart, lungs, kidneys or nervous system.

Unfortunately, arthritis can't be cured. Some people have good days and bad days. Some people have issues every day. But you can help keep it from getting worse and increase your flexibility by talking with your doctor about a treatment plan that's right for you.



Sources:

- 1 Arthritis Foundation, www.arthritisday.org/conditions/osteoarthritis/all-about-oa; www.arthritis.org/types-what-is-rheumatoid-arthritis.php
- 2 National Center for Biotechnology Information, U.S. National Library of Medicine, www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmedhealth/PMH0002223/
- 3 National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases, www.niams.nih.gov/Health_Info/Arthritis/arthritis_rheumatic_ga.asp
- 4 WebMD, www.webmd.com/rheumatoid-arthritis/guide/most-common-arthritis-types