

HEALTH REALLY MATTERS

Arthritis: Pain in the Joints

Quick Facts about arthritis

- Arthritis means inflammation of the joint (“arthro” means joint and “itis” means inflammation).
- Any joint in the body can be affected, the knee, hip and spine are most common.
- Joints become swollen, red, hot and painful. Often you can’t use the joint properly.
- Osteoarthritis is the most common and affects over 3 million Canadians.
- Among all causes of disability in Canada, arthritis ranks first for women and third for men.

Osteoarthritis

- More common in older people from wear and tear on your joints and the aging process.
- Having a physically demanding job or injuring a joint earlier in life can speed up osteoarthritis.
- Starts off milder and gets worse over time as the cartilage in the joint wears down.

Rheumatoid Arthritis

- A type of inflammatory arthritis (others include ankylosing spondylitis and psoriatic arthritis).
- Usually begins around the age of 40 – 60 but can affect people of all ages, including children.
- Is an autoimmune disease which means your body attacks and destroys your joints.
- In addition to the regular medications for pain or swelling, DMARDs (disease-modifying antirheumatic drugs) are often used to slow the progression of the disease. Talk to your pharmacist for more information.

Common treatments for arthritis

- Hot or cold therapy: heat is best to loosen up stiff muscles or joints, cold is best when joints are swollen.
- Physiotherapy or occupational therapy can give you exercises or strategies to manage with arthritis pain.
- Medicines (non-prescription):
 - Acetaminophen (Tylenol)
 - Anti-inflammatories: ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin), naproxen (Aleve)



- Gels or creams:
 - Diclofenac (Voltaren) gel is an anti-inflammatory gel that you can apply to swollen joints.
 - Capsaicin cream may also be tried.
- Natural health products such as glucosamine and chondroitin or fish oils may be beneficial for some people.
- Different types of surgery may be considered in people with severe arthritis.

You can help manage your arthritis with these healthy habits

- Keep moving! Regular physical activity can decrease arthritis pain. You may want to consult with a trainer or physiotherapist.
- Rest when you need to as arthritis can cause fatigue.
- Look into what helpful tools and devices are available to make everyday activities safer and easier.
- Manage your weight: finding your healthy weight can help your arthritis symptoms.
- Don't forget about your mental health. Living with a chronic disease is tough and can lead to depression. Keeping your mind healthy is important.

Your Pharmacist can

- Discuss benefits and possible side effects of the different medicines and work with you and your doctor to help you get the most out of them.
- Suggest ways to make it easier to take your medications regularly.
- Help to connect you with support and resources in the community.

Find more great information and tools here

- HealthLink BC—Osteoarthritis: <http://goo.gl/awTYBF>
- The Arthritis Society: <http://arthritis.ca>
- Symptom Checker: <http://goo.gl/BnUrhX>
- Self Management courses: <http://goo.gl/gyevWm>
- Arthritis Research Canada: <http://goo.gl/qavAjf>
- Arthritis Lifestyle Management Guide: <http://goo.gl/ZiGm8G>

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