

**BRIGGS**<sup>®</sup>

# ARTHRITIS PATIENT EDUCATION GUIDE

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# Arthritis Patient Education Guide

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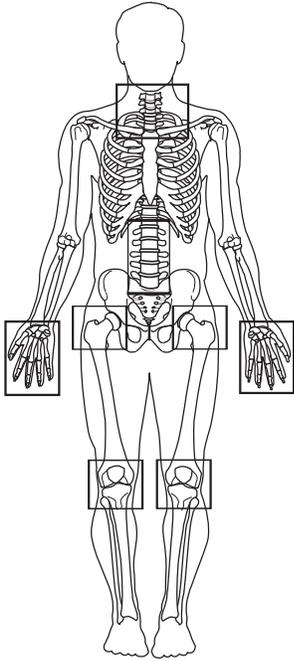
**Disclaimer:** We have attempted to make the information contained in this booklet as accurate as possible; however, MedForms makes no guarantees as to its accuracy and assumes no liability for the use of its forms and publications.

**Research Resources:** National Institutes of Health (NIH), National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases (NIAMS), Mayo Clinic, Arthritis Foundation, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

# SECTION 1. The Disease Process

## WHAT IS ARTHRITIS?

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The word arthritis means joint inflammation. Arthritis can affect joints (places where two bones meet) in any part of the body. Over time, the joint can become severely damaged. Arthritis is often a chronic disease, which means that it can affect you over a long period of time. At this time, the only type of arthritis that can be cured is arthritis caused by infections.

There are more than 100 forms of arthritis and other rheumatic diseases and conditions characterized by inflammation or pain in muscles, joints or fibrous tissue. These diseases may cause pain, stiffness and swelling in joints and other supporting structures of the body, such as muscles, tendons, ligaments and bones. Some forms can also affect other parts of the body, including various internal organs. Rheumatic diseases affect people of all races and ages; however, some are more common among certain populations.

Arthritis is one of the most common diseases in the United States and the leading cause of disability in this country. Arthritis affects more than one in every five Americans. By 2040, it is estimated that 26% of all adults over age 18 (78 million) will have some form of doctor-diagnosed arthritis. Children may also be diagnosed with arthritis, usually resulting from trauma or injury.

The cause of arthritis is unknown. Researchers continue to search for the cause of the major types of arthritis. While we don't know what causes arthritis, we do know what can make it worse. In the meantime, effective treatments for arthritis are available. The keys to any arthritis treatment program are rest, exercise, a healthy, well-balanced diet and learning to use your joints the right way. Treatment is different for each kind of arthritis.

This booklet focuses on two of the most common types of arthritis:

- Osteoarthritis
- Rheumatoid Arthritis

**Osteoarthritis is the most common type of arthritis.** This form of arthritis usually comes with age and most often affects the fingers, knees and hips. Sometimes osteoarthritis occurs after an injury to a joint. Osteoarthritis is often called “wear-and-tear” arthritis. The tissue that cushions the ends of bones within the joint (cartilage) is most affected by osteoarthritis. The cartilage begins to fray to the point where it may wear away entirely. Osteoarthritis can cause joint pain and stiffness.

**Rheumatoid arthritis** is an autoimmune disease, which occurs when the body’s defense system does not work properly and attacks healthy body tissue. The cause is not yet known. Rheumatoid arthritis most often affects the joints and bones of the hands, wrists and feet, but may also affect other areas of the body and cause problems in organs such as the lungs, heart and eyes.

With rheumatoid arthritis, the lining of joints (called the synovium) become inflamed causing pain, stiffness, swelling, warmth and redness. The affected joint may also lose its shape, resulting in loss of normal movement.

Rheumatoid arthritis can last a long time. The disease can be active (flare-up) or it can be in remission (little to no activity).

#### **Other Arthritic Conditions:**

More than 100 different disorders can be classified as arthritis. Some can affect one or more parts of a joint and some affect other parts of the body. Some of the other common arthritic conditions include:

- **Bursitis** is inflammation of the small serous sac (called bursa) between a tendon and a bone.
- **Tendonitis** is inflammation of a tendon - the fibrous tissue that connects muscles to other structures.
- **Gout** is a common form of inflammatory arthritis caused by increased levels of uric acid. Gout is usually very painful and typically affects one joint at a time (often the big toe joint). Repeated bouts of gout can lead to gouty arthritis, a worsening form of arthritis.
- **Fibromyalgia** is a condition that causes pain all over the body (also referred to as widespread pain), sleep problems, fatigue and often emotional and mental distress. People with fibromyalgia may be more sensitive to pain than people without fibromyalgia. This is called abnormal pain perception processing. The cause of fibromyalgia is not known, but it can be effectively treated and managed.
- **Systemic Lupus Erythematosus (SLE)** is an autoimmune disease in which the immune system attacks its own tissues, causing widespread inflammation and tissue damage in the affected organs. It can affect the joints, skin, brain, lungs, kidneys and blood vessels. There is no cure for lupus, but medical interventions and lifestyle changes can help control it.

## WARNING SIGNS OF ARTHRITIS

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The warning signs of arthritis include:

- Swelling in one or more joints;
- Stiffness around the joints that lasts for at least one hour in the early morning;
- Constant or recurring pain, soreness or tenderness in a joint;
- Difficulty using or moving a joint normally;
- Loss of joint mobility;
- Joint warmth and redness; and
- Cracking, popping or grinding noise in joint.

## RISK FACTORS

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The following are risk factors for osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis and other forms of arthritis:

- **Age:** Your risk of developing arthritis depends on your age. Arthritis is the leading cause of physical disability among adults 18 years of age and older.
- **Gender:** Generally, arthritis occurs more frequently in women than in men. However, osteoarthritis occurs more frequently in men before the age 45. Osteoarthritis is more common in women after the age of 45. Rheumatoid arthritis occurs two to three times more frequently in women as men.
- **Obesity:** Can increase the chances of women developing osteoarthritis. There is a definite link between obesity and the development of osteoarthritis of the knee in women. Diet and exercise can help with weight control and minimize the stress on weight-bearing joints such as the knee. Excess pounds put extra stress on weight-bearing joints such as the knees or hips and can aggravate arthritis. Every extra pound you gain puts four times the stress on your knees. Studies have shown that losing as little as 11 pounds may cut your risk of osteoarthritis of the knee by 50 percent. Also, if osteoarthritis has already affected one knee, weight reduction will reduce the chance of it occurring in the other knee.
- **Genetics:** Osteoarthritis may be hereditary. If you have osteoarthritis, other family members may be at higher risk for developing osteoarthritis.
- **Work Factors:** Work-related repetitive movements and physical trauma contribute to the development of osteoarthritis. For example, you are at high risk for osteoarthritis of the knee if your job requires repetitive bending, kneeling or squatting.
- **Inflammation:** Inflammation is your body's reaction to damage or to the presence of a foreign substance and may occur when a joint is injured, broken, infected or subjected to wear-and-tear over a long period of time. Usually, when the injury has healed or the infection is gone, the inflammation goes away. If it doesn't, you may have arthritis.



# This file is just a small sample of this booklet

## Our Patient Education Series offer:

- A simple solution for the education of individuals and family for common health conditions and issues
- A tool for smooth transitions between care settings
- Documentation tools to track compliance and record information (i.e., medications, appointments, diet)
- Guidance for lifestyle changes and other interventions to help with day-to-day management
- Large print and simplified language enhances readability and comprehension

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