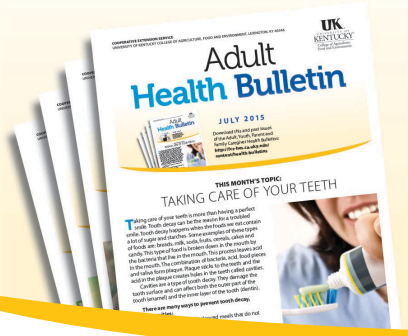
COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE
UNIVERSITY OF KENTUCKY COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND ENVIRONMENT, LEXINGTON, KY 40546

UNIVERSITY OF KENTUCKY
College of Agriculture, Food and Environment

Adult Health Bulletin



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THIS MONTH'S TOPIC:
ARTHRITIS AWARENESS

Did you know that "arthritis" is not a single disease? The word "arthritis" is used as a common word when talking about joint pain or diseases that affect the joints. There are many different types of arthritis and related illnesses. This type of medical issue can affect people of all ages and races, and both men and women. But it is more commonly found among women and as people age, there tends to be greater occurrence of pain and discomfort in the joints.

Some of the common signs of arthritis are swelling, stiffness, pain and even a decreased range of motion at a joint. These symptoms may be severe or they may be very mild for some individuals. The symptoms may be there one day and not the next. For others, the symptoms stay the same for years and years, while for others the symptoms get worse and worse. For some people, the changes to the joints are plainly visible and for others, the effects can only be seen through an X-ray.

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There are more than one hundred types of arthritis or related conditions.

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Here are some of the more common types of arthritis:

Degenerative Arthritis/Osteoarthritis

This type of arthritis is the most common and can be described as when cartilage on the end of bones wears away, allowing bone to rub against bone. A bone rubbing against another bone can be painful and can cause some swelling and stiffness of the joint. Risk factors for this type of arthritis include a family history of osteoarthritis, being overweight and age. If a person has had a previous injury to the area there also may be increased likelihood of developing osteoarthritis. Lowering the risk of degenerative arthritis begins with having a healthy bodyweight, staying physically active and avoiding injury to joints.

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Inflammatory Arthritis

When the immune system is working correctly, it protects the body from infection and illnesses. However, sometimes the immune system can attack the body. This type of arthritis happens when the immune system attack the joints and creates inflammation. Over time, this can damage the joints or even other internal organs. Two specific types of inflammatory arthritis are rheumatoid arthritis and psoriatic arthritis. With inflammatory arthritis, it is important to get treatment early. Treatment is used to slow down the activity and minimize or even prevent damage.

Infectious Arthritis

There are times that arthritis can be triggered by bacterium, virus or fungus entering the joint and causing inflammation. This type of arthritis can usually be treated quickly with antibiotics to clear the infection from the joint. There have been cases, however, where this kind of infection causes chronic arthritis.

How do I know if I have arthritis?

If you are concerned about a joint or joints, you should make an appointment with your healthcare provider. The healthcare provider may have some tests done to figure out which type of arthritis you have. Once the type has been recognized, it is possible for an arthritis specialist and/or other healthcare provider to work with you to best take care of your situation.

What can I do if I have arthritis?

It is important to learn about arthritis and different treatment options as needed if you or someone you love has it. It is also important to stay physically active and maintain a healthy bodyweight. There may be support groups in your community as well.

SOURCE:

http://www.arthritis.org/about-arthritis/understanding-arthritis/what-is-arthritis.php

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