

## Getting to Know Your Feet Arthritis

Arthritis is a disabling and crippling disease affecting more than 40 million Americans. Arthritis can cause decreased mobility due to painful and swollen joints therefore putting you at risk for other health problems such as becoming overweight. The foot contains 33 joints, making it susceptible to arthritis. Gender differences will also affect arthritis. Women are four times more likely to develop arthritis than men.

Arthritis can be caused from the following:

- Family history
- Injury to the joint such as fractures (break in the bone), or damage to the protective cartilage
- Infection in the joint
- Inflammatory bowel disorders such as colitis
- Drug use, both prescription and recreational
- Autoimmune disorders

Symptoms of arthritis include:

- Swelling in one or more joints
- Pain and tenderness in the joints
- Decreased mobility or motion
- Early morning joint stiffness
- Skin changes to the area such as rashes

### Types of Arthritis

#### Osteoarthritis

This is the most common form of arthritis. You may also hear it called degenerative joint disease. It is commonly caused from the normal wear and tear of a joint. This form of arthritis comes on gradually and usually manifests itself as we age. Symptoms include a dull, aching pain in the joint (more often occurring at night). Pain can become severe and is generally decreased after resting the joint. Being overweight may cause the symptoms to become more severe.

#### Rheumatoid Arthritis

Rheumatoid arthritis or RA is a crippling disease. It is a chronic inflammatory disease that comes on suddenly. It is thought to be an autoimmune disease and tends to run in families. Typical RA symptoms include severe and lengthy early morning stiffness and pain, fatigue (feeling overly tired), and weight loss. RA generally affects joints on both sides of the body so both feet and ankles would show symptoms. RA also causes joint deformity. Due to inflammation joints take on a “knobby-like” appearance.

## **Gout**

Gout is caused from an abnormal build-up of uric acid. Uric acid is a normal by-product of the diet. This abnormal build-up goes to the joints. Most often the big toe will be affected because of pressure to that area during walking. Men are affected more than women with gout. This can be the most painful form of arthritis.

If you experience any symptoms of arthritis, seek the advice of your health care provider. They will make an accurate diagnosis and form a treatment plan that is best suited for you and your activity level.

Adapted for use in Kentucky from American Podiatry Medical Association (2008). What is arthritis? Available online at [http://www.apma.org/s\\_apma/doc.asp?CID=394&DID=9385](http://www.apma.org/s_apma/doc.asp?CID=394&DID=9385)

This is a publication in an eight-part series on **Getting to Know Your Feet**. Other publications in this series are:

- Overview: HSW-PAR.820
- Common Foot Ailments: HSW-PAR.821
- Aging Feet: HSW-PAR.822
- Diabetes: HSW-PAR.824
- Injuries: HSW-PAR.825
- Information for Women: HSW-PAR.826
- Walking for Health: HSW-PAR.827

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