

Arthritis

The term “Arthritis” is used to classify over 100 rheumatic diseases and conditions that affect joints, the surrounding tissues, and the connective tissue.¹ These include fibromyalgia, osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, osteoporosis, and systemic lupus erythematosus.² The most prevalent forms of arthritis are osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis. Osteoarthritis is the degeneration of cartilage and its underlying bone within the joint, which will eventually lead to pain and joint stiffness.³ Rheumatoid arthritis is a systemic inflammatory disease that primarily affects the lining of the joints, but can also affect other organs.⁴

Prevalence

Arthritis is the most frequent physical cause of disability and affects nearly 46 million adults in the United States.⁵ It can affect people of all ages, race, and gender although the prevalence of arthritis is higher among women than men. Within LA County, 1.3 million adults (19.5%) have been diagnosed with arthritis,⁶ 59% of them women over the age of 65.⁷ The self-reported prevalence of arthritis in women over 65 varies with ethnicity, with 72% of black women reporting a diagnosis followed by 63% of Latinas, 58% of white women, and 44% of Asian-Pacific Islander women.⁷

Risk Factors for Arthritis

Obesity is strongly associated with the development and progression of arthritis, especially osteoarthritis.⁸ Almost 25% of individuals who are overweight or obese have arthritis.⁷ Genetic factors can lead to the development of specific types of arthritis including rheumatoid arthritis, and lupus.⁸ Five different genes have been identified that are associated with the development of rheumatoid arthritis.⁹ In addition to obesity and genetic factors, certain health factors can contribute to the development of arthritis including previous joint injury or joint infection, and by having an occupation that involves repetitive motions.⁸

Prevention of Arthritis

Maintaining a healthy weight, participating in at least two and half hours of moderate physical activity per week, and self management techniques can help decrease the advancement of the disease, and has been shown to decrease pain, improve function, and delay disability.⁶

Leading a healthy and active lifestyle can help prevent arthritis, and improve overall quality of life.

¹ Arthritis: Meeting the Challenge: At A Glance 2010. Retrieved from <http://www.cdc.gov/chronicdisease/resources/publications/AAG/arthritis.htm>

² Arthritis Types. Center for Disease Control and Prevention. Available from <http://www.cdc.gov/arthritis/basics/types.htm>

³ Osteoarthritis, Center for Disease Control and Prevention. Available from <http://www.cdc.gov/arthritis/basics/osteoarthritis.htm>

⁴ Rheumatoid Arthritis, Center for Disease Control and Prevention. Retrieved from <http://www.cdc.gov/arthritis/basics/rheumatoid.htm>

⁵ Key Messages Matrix, The Arthritis Foundation. Retrieved from <http://www.arthritis.org/key-messages.php>

⁶ Arthritis- The leading cause of Disability. LA County Department of Public Health, May 2006. Retrieved from <http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/wwwfiles/ph/hae/ha/Arthritis05.pdf>

⁷ Los Angeles County Department of Public Health, Office of Women’s Health. Health Indicators for Women in Los Angeles County: Highlighting Disparities by Ethnicity and Poverty Level, February 2010. <http://lapublichealth.org/owh/docs/Health-Indicators-2010.pdf>

⁸ Risk Factors, Center for Disease Control and Prevention. Retrieved from http://www.cdc.gov/arthritis/basics/risk_factors.htm

⁹ The Genetics Behind Rheumatoid Arthritis, Sept. 2007. The Arthritis Foundation. Retrieved from <http://www.arthritis.org/key-messages.php>