

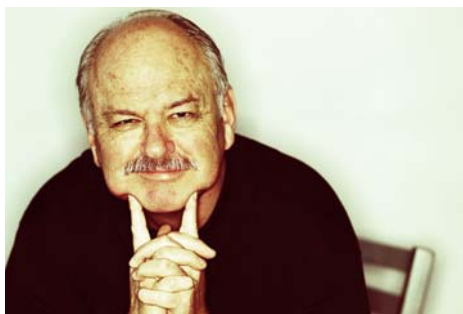
# Health Awareness

A County Health Pool Publication



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## 70 million Americans suffer from arthritis



Arthritis is a chronic disease of the joints that afflicts more than 70 million Americans. Arthritis affects people of all ages, including children. More than 100 different types of arthritis and related conditions exist. And treatments vary depending on the type of arthritis.

Although the exact cause(s) of arthritis is unknown, experts believe that heredity, gender and lifestyle may contribute to it. Fortunately, arthritis can be managed and people with arthritis can live long and fulfilling lives.

### Warning Signs for Arthritis

Warning signs for arthritis include pain, stiffness or swelling in one or more joints, or difficulty moving your joints. Pain or stiffness may be worse in the morning or after periods of inactivity.

See your doctor if you experience any of these symptoms for more than two weeks.

### Relief for arthritis sufferers

Doctors now believe that early aggressive treatment of arthritis can prevent or delay permanent damage to the joints. Doctors offer a variety of treatments to relieve pain, reduce inflammation and prevent further joint damage. Treatments may include over-the-counter and/or prescription medications, heat or cold therapy, exercise, diet, physical therapy, surgery or alternative therapies like acupuncture.

Two common types of arthritis—osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis—are discussed below.

### Osteoarthritis

Osteoarthritis (OA) is the most common type of arthritis, affecting 21 million Americans, most of whom are over 45 years of age. The majority of people over age 60 show some evidence of this disease.

OA is a degenerative disease characterized by the breakdown of cartilage and bones, causing swelling, pain and difficulty moving the joints. It often affects fingers and

weight bearing joints such as knees, hips, back, and neck. Previously injured joints are susceptible to OA.

### Rheumatoid Arthritis

Rheumatoid arthritis (RA) is one of the most debilitating forms of arthritis. It afflicts more than 2 million Americans and causes disability more often than any other disease except for stroke.

In RA, for reasons that are not well understood, the body's immune system attacks its own joints and other organs. RA is characterized by warm, painful, stiff and swollen joints and may lead to joint disfigurement.

RA frequently affects joints on both sides of the body simultaneously. It often affects hands, wrists, feet, ankles, knees, shoulders, neck, jaws and elbows.

For additional information, visit the Arthritis Foundation's website at [www.arthritis.org](http://www.arthritis.org) or call 800-283-7800.

# What can I do to prevent arthritis?

You may not be able to prevent arthritis, but you can reduce your risk for getting certain types of arthritis. You can also reduce your risk for disability if you already have arthritis.

**Maintain a healthy weight.** Excess weight increases the stress on joints and can lead to osteoarthritis. If you are already overweight, you can decrease your odds of getting osteoarthritis in your knees by losing as little as 10 pounds.

**Exercise moderately.** Regular moderate physical activity can strengthen muscles and bones, increase flexibility and stamina, increase energy, and improve your general health.

Weight-bearing exercises strengthen your bones and help prevent osteoporosis, a disease related to arthritis.

**Eat a healthy diet.** Eat a balanced diet to promote general health and maintain a healthy weight.

Eat oranges or drink orange juice. Studies have shown that vitamin C and other antioxidants may reduce your risk of developing osteoarthritis.

Eat foods with plenty of calcium and vitamin D—like milk, cheese and salmon—to strengthen your bones and reduce your risk for osteoporosis.

Some studies suggest that a diet rich in omega-3 fatty acids, which are found in cold water fish, may decrease inflammation of the joints.

Avoid organ meats, anchovies and sardines, which can increase your risk of developing gout, a form of arthritis caused by a buildup of uric acid in the joints.



**Don't smoke.** Smoking increases your risk of getting rheumatoid arthritis and makes it worse if you get it.

**Limit alcohol.** Excessive alcohol increases your odds of developing gout. Also, alcohol is dangerous for people on some arthritis medications.

Source: The Arthritis Foundation



## Easy grilled fish steaks

Cold water fish—such as salmon, mackerel and tuna—contain high levels of omega-3 fatty acids which are good for your heart and may reduce inflammation in the joints. The following recipe is an easy and delicious way to prepare cold water fish.

**Ingredients:**  
4 firm-fleshed fish steaks (salmon, tuna, swordfish, etc.)

**Marinade:**  
1/2 cup low-sodium soy sauce  
1/2 cup lemon juice

1/2 cup olive or canola oil  
2 Tbsp. sesame seeds

**Instructions:**  
Place fish in glass casserole dish. Combine marinade ingredients and pour over fish. Cover and marinate in refrigerator for 1-2 hours. Remove fish from marinade and grill (or broil in your oven) for about 10 minutes per side or until fish flakes easily with a fork.

Serve with a green salad and whole wheat rolls for a satisfying meal.  
Serves 4-6.