

## Arthritis Awareness

**T**he word “arthritis” means “joint inflammation.” Inflammation is one of the body’s natural reactions to disease or injury, and includes swelling, pain, and stiffness. Inflammation that lasts for a very long time or recurs, as in arthritis, can lead to tissue damage.



A joint is where two or more bones come together, such as the hip or knee. The bones of a joint are covered with a smooth, spongy material called cartilage, which cushions the bones and allows the joint to move without pain. The joint is lined by a thin film of tissue called the synovium. The synovium’s lining produces a slippery fluid called synovial fluid that nourishes the joint and helps reduce friction. Strong bands of tissue, called ligaments, connect the bones and help

keep the joint stable. Muscles and tendons also support the joints and enable you to move.

With arthritis, an area in or around a joint becomes inflamed, causing pain, stiffness and, sometimes, difficulty moving. Some types of arthritis also affect other parts of the body, such as the skin and internal organs.

### Types of Arthritis

There are more than 100 different types of arthritis. Some of the more common types include:

- **Osteoarthritis.** This is the most common type of arthritis. It occurs when the cartilage covering the end of the bones gradually wears away. Without the protection of the cartilage, the bones begin to rub against each other and the resulting friction leads to pain and swelling. Osteoarthritis can occur in any joint, but most often affects

the hands and weight-bearing joints such as the knee, hip and facet joints (in the spine). Osteoarthritis often occurs as the cartilage breaks down, or degenerates, with age or overuse. For this reason, osteoarthritis is sometimes called degenerative joint disease.

- **Rheumatoid arthritis.** Rheumatoid arthritis is a long-lasting disease that can affect joints in any part of the body except the lower back and most commonly involves the hands, wrists, and knees. With rheumatoid arthritis, the immune system -- the body’s defense system against disease -- mistakenly attacks itself and causes the joint lining to swell. The inflammation then spreads to the surrounding tissues, and can eventually damage carti-

(Over)



## Arthritis Awareness

(Continued)

lage and bone. In more severe cases, rheumatoid arthritis can affect other areas of the body, such as the skin, eyes, lungs, and nerves.

- **Gout.** Gout is a painful condition that occurs when the body cannot eliminate a natural substance called uric acid. The excess uric acid forms needle-like crystals in the joints that cause swelling and severe pain. Gout most often affects the big toe, knee, and wrist joints.

### What Are the Symptoms of Arthritis?

Different types of arthritis have different symptoms and the symptoms vary in severity from person to person. Osteoarthritis does not generally cause any symptoms outside the joint. Symptoms of other types of arthritis may include fatigue, fever, a rash, and the signs of joint inflammation, including:

- Pain
- Swelling

- Stiffness
- Tenderness
- Redness
- Warmth
- Joint deformity

### What Causes Arthritis Pain?

The pain of arthritis may come from different sources. These may include inflammation of the synovial membrane (tissue that lines the joints), the tendons, or the ligaments; muscle strain; and fatigue. A combination of these factors contributes to the intensity of the pain.

The pain of arthritis varies greatly from person to person, for reasons that doctors do not yet understand completely. Factors that contribute to the pain include swelling within the joint, the amount of heat or redness present, or damage that has occurred within the joint. In addition, activities affect pain differently so that some patients note pain in their joints after first getting out of bed in the morning whereas others develop pain after

prolonged use of the joint. Each individual has a different threshold and tolerance for pain, often affected by both physical and emotional factors. These can include depression, anxiety, and even hypersensitivity at the affected sites due to inflammation and tissue injury. This increased sensitivity appears to affect the amount of pain perceived by the individual.

### Things You Can Do to Manage Arthritis Pain

- Eat a healthy diet.
- Get 8 to 10 hours of sleep at night.
- Keep a daily diary of pain and mood changes to share with your physician.
- Choose a caring physician.
- Join a support group.
- Stay informed about new research on managing arthritis pain.

*webmd.com*

## Benefits Corner

### Reminder:

#### Out of Network

Just a reminder that preventative services that meet the Health and Human Services guideline to be covered at 100% are only covered at an in-network provider with the following exception; mammogram screening, PSA and colorectal cancer. If you are given a diagnosis code at your preventative care visit, the procedure will not be paid as preventative.

It is less cost to both you and the Pool to utilize in-network providers.

If you have any questions about whether or not a provider is in network or not, you can contact the Anthem dedicated customer service unit at 1-866-698-0087 or your CHP Benefits Administrator at 303-861-0507.