

# Health Awareness

A County Health Pool Publication



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## Arthritis Awareness -- The Basics

**D**id you know that there are more than 100 types of arthritis? Common arthritis symptoms of inflammation, pain, and stiffness are usually caused by degenerative arthritis (osteoarthritis). Other types of arthritis include rheumatoid arthritis (RA) and Juvenile arthritis (JA). No matter which type of arthritis you have, being aware of the basics can help you make an informed decision regarding your health.

### Osteoarthritis

Osteoarthritis (OA), also called osteoarthroses or degenerative joint disease, is the most common type of arthritis. OA is a chronic condition characterized by the breakdown of the joint's cartilage. The breakdown of cartilage causes the bones to rub against each other, causing stiffness, pain and loss of movement in the joint. If you've been diagnosed with OA you're not alone. This chronic disease affects some 27 million Americans.

OA occurs most often in knees, hips and hands. Other joints, particularly the shoulders, can also be affected. OA rarely affects other joints, except as a result of injury or unusual physical stress.

Usually joints affected by OA,



ache or become painful or stiff first thing in the morning, or during or after use. They may also be stiff after periods of inactivity. It's important to remain physically active despite any initial discomfort you might feel. Exercise keeps joints moving, which helps them stay lubricated. It also builds strength in the muscles surrounding the affected joint, so they can support it.

### Rheumatoid Arthritis

Rheumatoid arthritis is a chronic disease, mainly characterized by inflammation of the lining, or synovium, of the joints. It can lead to long-term joint damage, resulting in chronic pain, loss of function and disability.

RA is a chronic disease, meaning it can't be cured. Most people with RA experience intermittent bouts of intense disease activity, called

flares. In some people the disease is continuously active and gets worse over time. Others enjoy long periods of remission – no disease activity or symptoms at all. The symptoms and course of RA vary from person to person and can change on a daily basis. Your joints may feel warm to the touch and you might notice a decreased range

*(Over)*



of motion, as well as inflammation, swelling and pain in the areas around the affected joints. Evidence shows that early diagnosis and aggressive treatment to put the disease into remission is the best means of avoiding joint destruction, organ damage and disability.

### Juvenile Arthritis

Juvenile arthritis refers to any form of arthritis or an arthritis-related condition that develops in children or teenagers who are less than 18 years of age. Approximately 294,000 children under the age of 18 are affected by pediatric arthritis and rheumatologic conditions.

The common symptoms of JA are:

- Pain, swelling, tenderness and stiffness of joints, causing limited range of motion
- Joint contracture, which results from holding a painful joint in a flexed position for an extended period
- Damage to joint cartilage and bone leading to joint deformity and impaired use of the joint
- Altered growth of bone and joints leading to short stature

The cause of most forms of JA is unknown, but it is not contagious and there is no evidence that foods, toxins, allergies or vitamin deficiencies play a role.

There is no single test to diagnose JA. Laboratory studies including blood and urine tests are often needed to assist in a diagnosis.

## Benefits Corner

### Reminder

#### Express Scripts Clinical Safety Review (Home Delivery/Mail Order)

Express Scripts has added an additional clinical safety review to ensure patients are taking medications that are in compliance with the Controlled Substances Act (CSA), Title II of the Comprehensive Drug Abuse and Prevention and Control Act of 1970. CSA is a law that consolidates numerous laws regulating the manufacture and distribution of narcotics, stimulants, depressants, hallucinogens, anabolic steroids and chemicals used in the illicit production of controlled substances, and that they are being used safely and correctly as prescribed by their doctor.

Therefore, the following refill process will be followed for any drugs in this category unless a prescription from your doctor states otherwise;

- If patients have less than 35 days on hand, prescriptions will process immediately.
- 36 – 38 days on hand with no change in the prescription or therapy will be held and filled once the patient has a 35 day supply. No letter will be sent to the patient.
- Less than 39 days on hand the patient will get a letter.
  - Updated letters include the next refill date so patients know when they can make a refill request.
  - A FAQ document will also be included.

If you have any questions, please call the Anthem Mail Order customer service at 1-800-962-8192 or contact your CHP Benefits Administrator at 303-861-0507.

Imaging studies including X-rays or magnetic resonance images may be needed to check for signs of joint or organ involvement. Evaluation by a specialist – either a pediatric rheumatologist or rheumatologist – is often required.

With early diagnosis, most types of arthritis can be managed and the pain and disability minimized.

In addition, early diagnosis and treatment may be able to prevent tissue damage caused by arthritis. Early, aggressive treatment is particularly important for rheumatoid arthritis in order to help prevent further damage and disability down the road.