

Wellness by the Month

Arthritis Awareness Month

What is Arthritis?

Arthritis is the second leading cause of work disability, falling just behind heart disease. It is a disease of the joints and affects nearly 66 million adults and nearly 300,000 children and adolescents. The symptoms of arthritis are pain, loss of movement and swelling. Arthritis can limit a person's ability to complete simple tasks, like walking, dressing and bathing.

Types of Arthritis

Arthritis is a general name for more than 100 conditions. Some of the more common types of arthritis are:

- **Osteoarthritis** - a degenerative joint disease that causes the cartilage that covers the ends of the bone to deteriorate, causing pain due to bone to rubbing against bone. This is the most common form of arthritis.
- **Rheumatoid arthritis** - an autoimmune disease that causes the body's immune system to attack the lining of the joints. This is one of the most serious and debilitating types of arthritis and primarily affects women.
- **Gout** - a painful condition that most often affects small joints, especially the big toe. It is usually a result of a defect in body chemistry and can much of the time be controlled with medications and a change in diet. Gout primarily affects men.
- **Osteoporosis** - a disease in which bones become fragile and more likely to break.

Living with Arthritis

The pain of arthritis can be extremely debilitating. There are medications available to help with pain and staying active can also help. Always check with your doctor before starting a new exercise program. Some simple ways to keep your joints moving are:

- Stretching and range of motion exercises
- Walking at a comfortable pace
- Low-impact aerobic activities
- Light weight lifting
- Seated or chair aerobic exercises
- Water activities, such as swimming or water aerobics