

Pfizer Australia

HEALTH REPORT

ISSUE #5

MANAGING ARTHRITIS

This edition of the Pfizer Australia Health Report looks at a common and highly debilitating health problem that confronts a surprisingly large number of people - arthritis.

According to Access Economics, more than three million Australians have the condition and about 60 percent of them are of working age. There are more than 100 forms of arthritis, but the most common are osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis.

Rheumatoid arthritis (RA) is an auto-immune disease in which inflammation (pain, heat and swelling) affects the joints and, sometimes, other organs of the body. Osteoarthritis (OA) is a degenerative condition which affects body cartilage, breaking it down and causing pain and/or deformation in the fingers and weight-bearing joints, like the knees, feet, hips and back.

Arthritis can affect people of all ages but most continue to lead full and active lives. This is easier if they understand their arthritis and learn techniques to help manage it.

In this edition of the Pfizer Australia Health Report, we look at the hidden cost of arthritis, with new polling showing that two-thirds of Australians with the condition feel it has affected their emotional wellbeing.

One-in-five Australians with arthritis say they are depressed. A third say this has caused stress to their family and friends.

We reveal some of the coping mechanisms to deal with the condition and where to go for help or information.

This month's Health Report partner is Arthritis Australia, a non-government community health charity working to promote understanding of the condition, and to assist funding of research.

Our findings on Australian attitudes towards arthritis are based on national polling of 1623 people, aged 16 and over, in 805 households, conducted by independent consultants Stallznov Research.

The Pfizer Australia Health Report is produced monthly, in partnership with health consumer organisations and medical experts, and provides information and news that you and your family need to live a healthier, happier lifestyle.

The Pfizer Australia Health Report is always available free from www.healthreport.com.au where you can sign-up for e-mail alerts of future editions. You can also request additional copies by calling **1800 675 229**.

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DISEASE CAN STRIKE EARLY

Polling for this month's Health Report confirms that arthritis is not just a matter for older Australians.

Fourteen percent of survey respondents diagnosed with arthritis report that they first noticed the condition between the ages of 30 and 39.

Another 21 percent say onset was between 40 and 49 and 26 percent between 50 and 59.

Vice president of Arthritis Australia, Dr Mona Marabani, said this highlights that arthritis is not just an indication of ageing and can occur in significant numbers of younger people.

"Of those with arthritis in the survey, 66 percent report they had osteoarthritis and 20 percent say they had rheumatoid arthritis, which are the most common forms of the condition," said Dr Marabani.

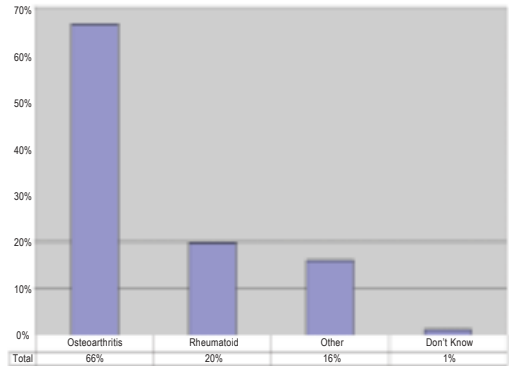
Australians with arthritis are turning to their GP for medical advice with 86 percent reportedly having the condition diagnosed by a medical practitioner.

Regarding what therapies might be useful, 61 percent nominated prescription medicines compared to 18 percent for over-the-counter medications.

There was high awareness of exercise being important, but very few seem aware that arthritis self-management courses could also be helpful.

While the research showed that people's experience of arthritis was very similar, regardless of their age, sex, or occupation, opinions about useful treatments did vary considerably.

Type of Arthritis in Respondents



For example, women were far more likely than men to see benefits in water exercise, diet and herbal or alternative therapies.

People with diagnosed arthritis were generally less likely than the rest of the population to see any treatment as being effective.

"This is of concern because it indicates that many people are not getting adequate relief or utilising all resources available to manage their condition," said Dr Marabani.

While 84 percent of those with arthritis would consult a doctor for more information about the condition, other sources of information were not widely accessed. For example, the Internet was cited by 26 percent, magazines 36 percent, state arthritis organisations 19 percent, and pharmacists by 16 percent.

"It's important for people to realise that support is available to help people manage their arthritis via the State and Territory Offices of Arthritis Australia," said Dr Marabani.



Two-Thirds Say Arthritis Affects Mental Outlook

Two-thirds of Australians with arthritis say their condition has affected their emotional wellbeing, with 22 percent saying they are depressed.

National polling conducted for Arthritis Australia and the Pfizer Australia Health Report shows that arthritis can result in marked loss of confidence and self-esteem, as well as heightened anxiety and depression.

One-third of patients surveyed suffered anxiety related to their condition and another third said arthritis has caused them to lose confidence.

One-third of patients also said they had caused family and friends stress because of their condition. Of these, around half felt the stress caused was "moderate" or "a lot".

"The snowballing affect of depression, which can cause a range of personal issues, has the potential to make the lives of a large number of people with arthritis very difficult," said Dr Mona Marabani, the vice president of Arthritis Australia.

"People should be reassured, however, that help is at hand from their doctor or other healthcare professionals, or from Arthritis Australia, which offers very effective self-management courses."

Asked how concerned people were that their condition would affect their health as they aged, one-third of arthritis patients were either "extremely worried" or "very worried". Women were less concerned than men, despite more females having diagnosed arthritis.

The survey has significant implications for employers, with more than half (56 percent) of people with arthritis saying they have experienced difficulties in the workplace because of their condition.

The findings also support a March 2001 analysis undertaken by Access Economics that estimated the loss of earnings from absenteeism and early retirement due to arthritis was \$6.32 billion.

In the latest polling, nearly 80 percent of people with arthritis reported their ability to perform tasks effectively had been reduced.

As well as affecting performance at work, 16 percent reported that their condition had forced them to take time off, and almost as many (15 percent) felt that having arthritis had reduced their employment opportunities.

"These results show that arthritis has a significant negative impact on activity in the workplace," said Dr Marabani. "Fortunately, the level of discrimination in the workplace is very low with, only two percent reporting this."



Life is our life's work.

This edition of the Pfizer Australia Health Report has been produced in partnership with Arthritis Australia, which is a non-government community health charity working to promote understanding and awareness of arthritis.

Arthritis Australia's objectives are: funding research into the causes and cures of arthritis; educating health professionals; promoting community awareness of problems confronting people with arthritis and; providing support, advice and information for patients and their families.

For arthritis information, log onto www.arthritisaustralia.com.au or call toll-free: 1800 011 041



EXPLODING FOOD MYTHS

While there is no specific diet recommended for people with arthritis, balancing all aspects of lifestyle will optimise a person's health.

Good diet is important for a disease like arthritis, because it affects wellbeing and a positive outlook.

Arthritis Australia answers some common questions about arthritis and diet:

Do certain foods cause or aggravate arthritis?

There is no substantial information confirming whether certain foods should be avoided, except in the case of gout. People with gout should avoid alcohol and foods high in purine such as shellfish, sardines, herrings, offal, bacon and yeast. It is also important to drink plenty of fluids.

There has been no scientific evidence to support removing "night shade" foods from the diet, such as tomatoes, potatoes, eggplants and peppers.

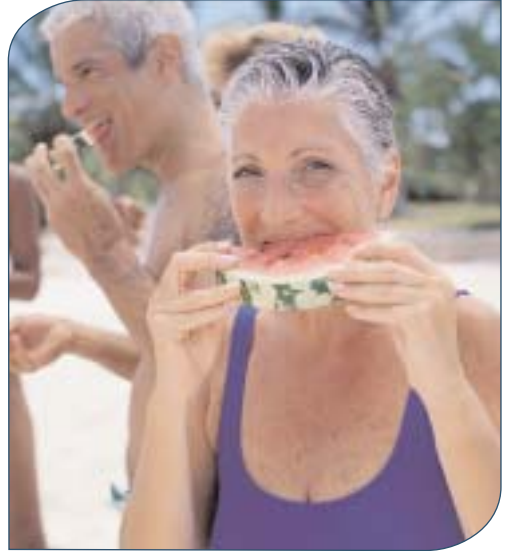
There is also no proof that dairy products cause arthritis. Many people with arthritis are at increased risk of osteoporosis, so they should ensure their diet has an adequate intake of calcium.

There is mixed evidence as to whether a vegetarian diet will help any form of arthritis. Eating more fruits and vegetables will increase the intake of antioxidants and vitamins, but a strict vegetarian diet can be inadequate in certain nutrients such as iron, vitamin B12 and zinc.

Can certain foods help arthritis?

Research has shown several ways in which diet can assist arthritis.

Certain types of polyunsaturated fat, particularly omega 3 fats, have a mild anti-inflammatory effect. Usually these fats are found in higher quantities in oily fish such as salmon and sardines.



Eating oily fish two to three times a week is a better option than taking omega-3 capsules, as the capsules differ in the amount of omega-3 fats they contain and don't have some of the other beneficial nutrients found in fish.

There has been recent evidence suggesting the beneficial effects of some vitamins and other nutrients. It is best to obtain these nutrients by including lots of fruit and vegetables in the diet. Health professional advice should be sought before taking any extra vitamin and mineral supplements.

Does weight affect arthritis?

Excess weight increases the stress on many joints, which is particularly important for people with osteoarthritis. Being overweight also increases the risk of developing osteoarthritis.

If someone is overweight, losing kilograms will decrease the stress on joints, reduce pain and maintain or improve mobility.



Towards Self-Management



Learning how to manage a condition proactively is an important step to coping more effectively with a chronic condition like arthritis.

Arthritis Australia's local State or Territory offices can advise of self-management courses which show how a person can change their lifestyle to lessen the impact of arthritis.

Skills taught include how to:

- Manage symptoms such as fatigue and depression;
- Communicate effectively with a doctor and other health professionals;
- Lessen frustration;
- Fight fatigue and;
- Get more out of life.

The accredited self-management courses are run over six weeks, for two hours each week. A friend, carer or relative is welcome to attend.

The course was developed by Stanford University in California and has been evaluated formally in more than 1200 people with heart disease, lung disease, stroke or arthritis who were followed for up to three years.

The results showed that participation led to significant improvements in exercise, cognitive symptom self-management, communication with physicians, self-reported general health, disability through fatigue and social activities.

Participants also spent fewer days in hospital and there was a trend toward fewer outpatient visits.



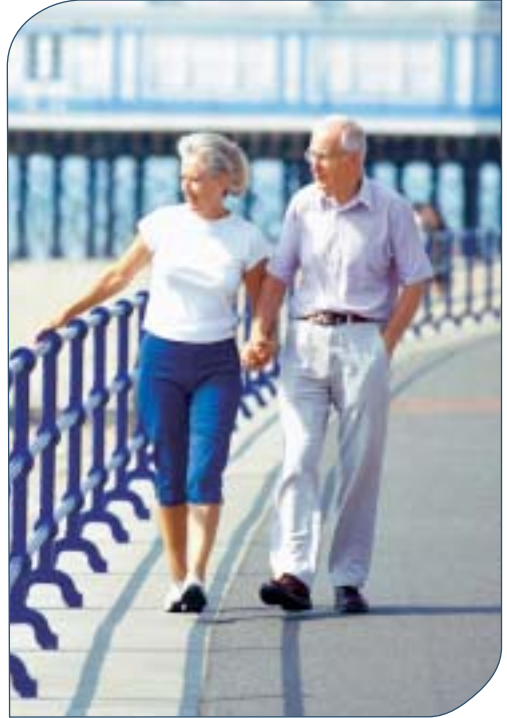
Balancing Rest and Exercise

It's important to achieve a balance between rest and exercise to manage arthritis symptoms. If somebody's not accustomed to exercise, excessive exertion can cause more harm than good, but too much rest can also increase joint pain and stiffness.

Your GP, rheumatologist or physiotherapist will be able to advise on the appropriate type and level of activity, and whether there may be any side effects of medication that may limit the ability to exercise.

Here are some useful tips to achieving the right balance between rest and exercise:

- As arthritis symptoms can vary from day to day, the joints that are affected and the intensity of the pain will often vary. It is important to recognise the signs that arthritis is active such as swelling, redness, warmth and tenderness when touched;
- Patients should set aside five to 10 minutes three times a day to put all joints through their full range of motion. (An easy way to remember is to do this before breakfast, lunch and dinner);
- When arthritis is active and joints are inflamed, activity should be minimised. The joints should still be gently moved through their full range of motion to help alleviate stiffness and improve circulation, but vigorous exercise should be avoided;
- Patients should avoid sitting or lying in one position for too long. They should aim to change position or stand up and/or move the joints every 30 to 40 minutes;
- Some muscle and/or joint soreness following exercise is normal, but if this is prolonged, it suggests too much exertion or intensity;
- Exercise should suit the patient - it should be kind to the joints and enjoyable. Time should be set aside every day for relaxation such as a short nap, progressive muscle relaxation, meditation or sitting down with a cup of tea;
- Exercise programs should start at a low intensity and gradually build up. For example, start by walking to the front gate and back twice a week then, as fitness improves, gradually increase the distance and frequency;
- Look to incorporate "incidental" exercise that can be part of daily activity, such as cleaning or walking to the shops. A patient should not plan an exercise session in the morning if they are planning on cleaning the house later that afternoon.





10 STEPS FOR LIVING WELL WITH ARTHRITIS

Step 1: Take control by knowing your disease:

Take time to learn more about arthritis and to discover what to do to improve your condition. Many people find that learning about their arthritis, and what they can do about it, gives them back a feeling of control over their lives.

Step 2: Don't delay, see your doctor:

Because arthritis can worsen if left untreated, see your doctor as early as possible for a proper diagnosis. This will assist an understanding of the condition and development of a plan for managing it. Early diagnosis will reduce pain, avoid the condition deteriorating, and help maintain mobility.

Step 3: Work with your healthcare team and be an important part of it:

An important part of living well with arthritis is working with a healthcare team. This team may include a variety of healthcare specialists. Remember, the patient is the most important member of the healthcare team and should establish, and maintain, good communication with all the other members.

Step 4: Know about your treatment options:

There are many treatments to relieve pain and stiffness, maintain flexibility, and slow the development of arthritis. Patients should work with their healthcare team to find a combination of treatments that best suits the type of arthritis, the joints affected, the amount of pain experienced, their lifestyle and activity level.

Step 5: Find new ways to stay active:

Not all types of exercise are appropriate for every type of arthritis. Before starting exercise, patients should ask their doctor and healthcare team to help develop a program to suit.

It's important to choose activities that you will enjoy and that do not make your arthritis worse.

Step 6: Learn techniques to help manage your pain:

Sometimes medicines, physical therapies and other treatments cannot relieve all pain. There are techniques to cope with pain so a person can go on living life the way they want to.

Step 7: Acknowledge your feelings and seek support:

It is natural to feel frustrated, angry, scared or even depressed at the prospect of having arthritis. Understanding that these can be common reactions is the first step. Seeking advice and support from friends, family and healthcare professionals is the next. Depression is an illness - so the sooner treatment is sought, the sooner a patient will find relief.

Step 8: Make food choices that count:

See the story on page four. For more information about healthy eating, diet and arthritis, refer to nutritionist Catherine Saxelby's website at: www.foodwatch.com.au/arthritis.html

Step 9: Balance your life:

People with arthritis need to find the right balance between work, activity and rest. Because you might not always be able to achieve everything you want to in one day, you should list the things you need to do, in order of importance.

Step 10: Call your local State or Territory Arthritis Australia office:

Contacting the local State or Territory Arthritis Australia office is the best way of finding an arthritis self-management course. See the story on Self-Management on page five and the list of contacts on the back page.



USEFUL LINKS AND CONTACTS

www.healthinsite.gov.au

healthinsite.gov.au is an Australian Government initiative funded by the Department of Health and Ageing. It is a single entry point to quality information from leading health information providers, including peak health organisations, government agencies and educational and research institutions.

www.mydr.com.au

mydr.com.au is an Australian health information site on a variety of health topics which has been approved by the Australian Government's health website healthinsite.gov.au.

www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au

This site is funded by the Victorian Government and aims to provide the community with access to online health-related information which is quality assured, reliable, up-to-date and locally relevant.

For more information about healthy eating:

www.health.gov.au/pubhlth/strateg/food/guide/index.htm

The Australian Government has a site devoted to healthy eating.

www.foodwatch.com.au/arthritis.html

Leading Australian nutritionist Catherine Saxelby has a website.

www.nutritionaustralia.org

Nutrition Australia is a non-government, non-profit, community-based organisation that aims to promote the health and wellbeing of all Australians.

ARTHRITIS ORGANISATIONS

Arthritis Australia

52 Parramatta Road, Forest Lodge NSW 2037. GPO Box 121, Sydney NSW 2001
Phone: 02 9552 6085 Fax: 02 9552 6078 Email: info@arthritisfoundation.com.au
For all arthritis information: www.arthritisaustralia.com.au Phone: 1800 011 041

Arthritis ACT

Level 2B, Grant Cameron Community Centre, 27 Mulley Street, Holder ACT 2611. PO Box 4017, Weston Creek ACT 2611

Arthritis New South Wales

13 Harold Street, North Parramatta NSW 2151. Locked Bag 16 Post Office, North Parramatta NSW 2151.

Arthritis Northern Territory 6 Caryota Court, Coconut Grove NT 0810. PO Box 452, Nightcliff NT 0814.

Arthritis Queensland 1 Cartwright Street, Windsor QLD 4030. PO Box 2121, Windsor QLD 4030

Arthritis South Australia Unit 1, 202-208 Glen Osmond Road, Fullarton SA 5063

Arthritis Tasmania McDougall Building, 30/9 Ellerslie Road, Battery Point TAS 7004

Arthritis Victoria 263-265 Kooyong Road, Elsternwick VIC 3185. PO Box 130, Caulfield South VIC 3162

Arthritis Western Australia 17 Lemnos Street, Shenton Park WA 6008. PO Box 34, Wembley WA 6913

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