

# The ABC's of Arthritis- Explaining the many facts about arthritis and its related diseases from **A to Z**.

**A AGE**– A person's age plays a role in the onset of **Osteoarthritis** due to simple wear and tear degeneration of the joints but is NOT an inevitable part of aging; **ANTHOCYANINS (Cherry Juice)**- Compounds found in plants that have been shown to be up to 10x more effective than common NSAID's for treating arthritis and can be used to neutralize swelling and can dissolve uric acid crystals that form in joints; **ARTHRITIS**– The inflammation of a joint- over 100 arthritis-related diseases have been identified and over 50 million people in the United States have doctor-diagnosed arthritis with 21 million having arthritis-related activity limitations (see **YEAR** for the year 2030 projections on diagnosed numbers)

**B BACK PAIN**- Back pain affects 50 to 80 percent of people in the U.S. at some point in their lives- back pain should not be considered a normal part of aging as it is a chronic condition that calls for similar lifestyle changes as diseases like arthritis and **Diabetes**; **BURSITIS**– Inflammation of the fluid-filled sac (bursa) that lies between a tendon and skin, or between a tendon and bone– pain may be acute or chronic and can be caused by chronic overuse, trauma, **Rheumatoid Arthritis**, **Gout**, or infection– commonly in the shoulder, knee, elbow, and hips

**C CARPAL TUNNEL SYNDROME (CTS)**- Pressure on the median nerve in the wrist that supplies feeling and movement to parts of the hand that can lead to numbness, tingling, weakness, or muscle damage in the hand and fingers, and is common in people who perform repetitive motions of the hand and wrist– CTS occurs more often in women than men; **CHONDROITEN**– A major component of cartilage that helps absorb fluid into the connective tissue around a joint and is often taken along with the supplement **Glucosamine**; **CORTICOSTEROIDS**- Medications often used to treat arthritis because of their overall effectiveness in reducing inflammation– examples- cortisone, prednisone, and methylprednisolone

**D DIABETES**– Arthritis and diabetes are not directly related but the diseases often overlap and have several common symptoms- an estimated 52% of people with diabetes also have arthritis; **DIAGNOSIS**– All forms of management and treatment need to be discussed and approved by a physician- it is extremely important to be diagnosed as soon as joint pain or stiffness becomes a problem; **DISABILITY**– Arthritis is the leading cause of disability worldwide

**E EFFECTS OF ARTHRITIS**– Pain and fatigue may become frequent leading to lifestyle and work changes, and physical changes may effect appearance; **ERGONOMIC**– The science of studying and designing equipment and devices that fit the human body, movements and abilities; **EXERCISE**– Light to moderate exercise 3 times a week for 30 minute intervals is a good form of arthritis management- high-impact exercises such as football or basketball are not recommended by the **Arthritis Foundation**, a national non-profit volunteer health agency dedicated to the prevention, control and cure of arthritis

**F FIBROMYALGIA**– A syndrome characterized by wide-spread musculoskeletal pain that is generally associated with extreme fatigue, stiffness, and possibly depression or anxiety– it is more common in women and is estimated to affect 3.7 million people, but may be higher because the symptoms may be found in other conditions without a diagnosis of Fibromyalgia

**G GLUCOSAMINE**– A naturally-occurring substance in the body that plays a role in building cartilage that is taken as a supplement, often along with **Chondroitin**; **GOUT**– A form of arthritis that causes sudden, severe episodes of pain, tenderness, redness, warmth and swelling of the joints– most commonly found in the big toe with a build-up of uric acid crystals

**H HEART DISEASE**– Arthritis and heart disease often occur simultaneously as arthritis affects an estimated 57% of adults with heart disease; **HEREDITY**– Many forms of arthritis or rheumatic diseases have genetic components– each disease has its own unique degree and pattern of heredity, as well as different genes which influence susceptibility and severity of the disease; **HISPANIC PREVALENCE**– The CDC reports that 3.1 million Hispanics have some form of arthritis

**I INJURY (Or Overuse of a Joint)**– Athletes and people whose jobs require repetitive motion have a higher risk of osteoarthritis

**J JOINT REPLACEMENT SURGERY**– May be an option for extremely damaged joints;

**JUVENILE RHEUMATOID ARTHRITIS (JRA)**- A type of arthritis that happens in children age 16 or younger, it causes joint swelling, stiffness and reduced motion– also called juvenile idiopathic arthritis (**JIA**), an estimated 300,000 children are affected in the United States

**K (Vitamin)**- Poor intake of vitamin K, a fat-soluble vitamin present in leafy, green vegetables and some vegetable oils, is a common problem with potentially negative effects on a number of body systems and functions, including joint health– insufficient vitamin K can result in abnormal cartilage and bone mineralization and thus possibly the formation of osteophytes (“bone spurs”) that are seen in **Osteoarthritis** (OA)

**L LIMITATIONS**– The CDC reports that adults with arthritis report physical limitations in the following areas (in ascending order)– grasp, reach, sit, carry, push, walk, stand, and stoop/ bend; **LUPUS**– An inflammatory disease that affects the joints, skin, kidneys and other parts of the body- an estimated 90% of people with Lupus are women; **LYME DISEASE**– A bacterial infection transmitted by deer ticks infected with a bacteria responsible for the outbreak of arthritis– approximately 60% of those not treated develop recurrent attacks of painful, swollen joints that last a few days to a few months and can shift from one joint to another with the knee being the most commonly affected– about 10% to 20% of patients will develop lasting arthritis

**M MUSCLE WEAKNESS**– The muscles surrounding joints can help reduce the risk of joint injury if the muscles are strong and un-injured; strengthening exercises are helpful

**N NSAID (Nonsteroidal Anti-inflammatory Drug)**– Drugs with analgesic and antipyretic (fever-reducing) effects and, in higher doses, have anti-inflammatory effects- common forms are aspirin, ibuprofen and naproxen which are available as over-the-counter (OTC) drugs

**O OBESITY**– Every pound lost reduces the burden on the knee joints by 4-6 pounds- eat a balanced, healthy diet to avoid obesity as overweight adults with arthritis are 44% more likely to be physically inactive; **OSTEOARTHRITIS** (OA)- A chronic condition that occurs when the cartilage around a joint is degenerated and causes pain and stiffness, it is especially common in the knees, hips and hands- an estimated 27 million people have OA; **OSTEOPOROSIS**– A disease that causes bones to lose mass and become brittle- increasing chances of joint injury

**P PSORIATIC ARTHRITIS**– A type of arthritis that often occurs with **Psoriasis** of the skin, the arthritis may be mild and involve only a few joints, particularly those at the end of the fingers or toes– often the skin gets worse at the same time as the arthritis

**Q QUESTIONS FOR YOUR DOCTOR**– Ask about all symptoms as even small irritants can become major problems- ask about all types of management and treatment- ask about any prescribed medications and ask about what types of physical activity are still allowed

**R RAYNAUD'S PHENOMENON**- A condition in which cold temperatures or strong emotions cause blood vessel spasms that block blood flow to the fingers, toes, ears, and nose– common causes are arthritis and autoimmune conditions, such as **Rheumatoid Arthritis** and **Lupus**, and repeated injury, particularly from vibrations such as those caused by typing; **RHEUMATOID ARTHRITIS (RA)**- A chronic condition in which the body's immune system attacks the synovial membrane that lines the joints, causing pain, swelling, redness and heat- an estimated 1.3 million people have RA

**S SCLERODERMA**– An autoimmune, connective tissue disease– it is not a single disease, but rather a symptom of a group of diseases (**Raynaud's Phenomenon**, **RA**, **Lupus**) complicated by the abnormal growth of connective tissue which supports the skin and internal organs; **SPINAL STENOSIS**– Narrowing of the spinal column that causes pressure on the spinal cord, usually as a person ages and the disks become drier and start to shrink and the bones and ligaments of the spine swell or grow larger due to arthritis or long-term inflammation; **SYMPTOMS**– Pain in or around a joint, stiffness or problems moving a joint; swelling in a joint usually indicate some form of arthritis

**T TENDONITIS**– The tendons around a joint become inflamed for a variety of reasons, and the action of pulling the muscle becomes irritating– if the normal smooth gliding motion of a tendon is impaired, the tendon will become inflamed and movement will become painful; **TOOLS AND ASSISTIVE DEVICES**- Devices that can be used to increase quality of life and to make certain tasks easier to complete- examples include door knob grips, seat belt handles, steps, braces, ergonomic handles, reaching tools, and eating and cooking utensils

**U USING ANALGESICS (Topical Pain Relievers)**- Useful for fighting discomfort but do not fight inflammation, examples include Icy Hot, Bengay and other over-the-counter creams

**V VITAMINS**- **C**– prevents cartilage damage and reduce the risk of OA; **D**– protects bones and can slow the progression of arthritis forms; **B3**– maintains supple joints and is important for people who are active; **E**– antioxidant that can decrease joint pain and help prevent joint damage; **Copper**– tends to be deficient in people with RA and needs to be taken as a supplement with a well-balanced diet and physician approval

**W WOMEN**– An estimated 60% of all people with arthritis are female and many forms of arthritis are more prevalent in women such as **RA**, **Fibromyalgia**, **Lupus** and **Osteoporosis**; **WORK**– Chronic illness may influence functioning abilities in the workplace and modifications or other changes may need to be made to continue to be productive

**X X-PLORING ALTERNATIVE THERAPIES**– Natural herbal therapies, supplements, massage, acupuncture, and aroma therapy have all been proven to have pain-relieving benefits, but beware of unproven, homemade or cultural remedies!

**Y YAWN**– Go ahead, take a nap! Resting the joints periodically will allow both the joints and muscles, tendons and ligaments around the joint to recover; **YEAR**– Research shows that by the year 2030 and estimated 67 million people will have a form of arthritis and an estimated 25 million of those adults will report arthritis-attributable activity limitations, including workplace limitations

**Z ZERO IN ON LIFE IMPROVEMENT**– Stress can build while dealing with arthritis and that can influence a person's feeling of self-worth; support groups and counseling are available and many exercise programs exist to help with arthritis management



**Sources of Information**  
Centers for Disease Control- [www.cdc.gov/arthritis](http://www.cdc.gov/arthritis)  
National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases– [www.niams.nih.gov](http://www.niams.nih.gov)  
United States Department of Health and Human Services– [www.hhs.gov](http://www.hhs.gov)  
National Arthritis Foundation- [www.arthritis.org](http://www.arthritis.org)



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