



Arthritis in North Carolina



What is it? Arthritis can best be described as problems with joints, ligaments, tendons and muscles near joints. It is a major cause of pain, stiffness and sometimes swelling in and around these joints. It is a chronic disease, which means it is long lasting and has no cure.

Who is affected? In 2003, arthritis affected more than 2.4 million North Carolinians, with an incidence of one in three. This rate is higher than the national rate, which is one in five, or more than 43 million people. Projections are for that number to increase to over 60 million by 2020 as our population ages. Arthritis costs North Carolina in excess of \$1 billion each year in lost wages. Arthritis is the leading cause of work disabilities.

How to manage? Arthritis can limit movement and makes work and other daily activities painful and difficult. Arthritis pain reduces the quality of life and often leads to social isolation and depression. One of the ways to improve quality of life is to learn ways to manage this disease. It is important for people living with arthritis to develop confidence in themselves as caretakers of their bodies. Early diagnosis and appropriate management of arthritis, including self-help courses, weight control and physical activity can help people with arthritis function better, stay productive and lower health care costs.

What is being done? The N.C. Arthritis Program is collaborating with the North Carolina/South Carolina Chapter of the Arthritis Foundation and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to reduce the occurrence, disability, activity limitation, social isolation and work limitation due to arthritis and other rheumatic conditions for North Carolinians.

The program offers workshops, presentations, exhibits and arthritis management certification training to increase awareness across the state about the importance of early detection diagnosis, treatment and management of arthritis. Several of the educational trainings include Arthritis Foundation Exercise Program (AFEP), Arthritis Self-Help Course (ASHC) and the communications campaign *Physical Activity: The Arthritis Pain Reliever*.

The N.C. Arthritis Program is in the process of convening an Arthritis Advisory Board in 2005, which will be comprised of community partners. This Board will work to promote public awareness about arthritis, increase educational opportunities for both persons living with arthritis as well as healthcare professionals working with arthritis-stricken clients, and will advocate for state funding resources.

How to get involved? If you would like to get involved in arthritis education efforts or volunteer with the N.C. Arthritis Advisory Board, contact N.C. Arthritis Program Coordinator, Peggy Carawan at 919-707-5222 or e-mail peggy.carawan@ncmail.net

For more information please visit
www.NCArthritisprogram.com



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