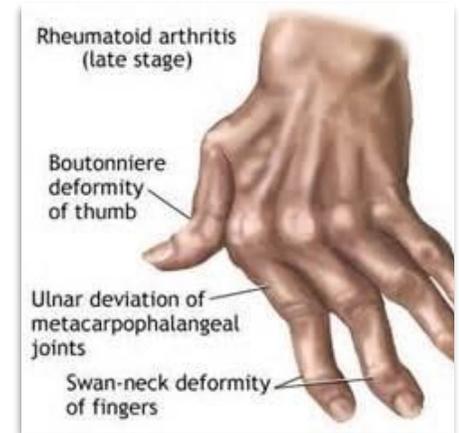


What is Arthritis ?

Arthritis is a joint disorder featuring inflammation. A joint is an area of the body where two different bones meet. A joint functions to move the body parts connected by its bones. Arthritis literally means inflammation of one or more joints. Arthritis is frequently accompanied by joint pain. Joint pain is referred to as arthralgia. Arthritis is not a single disease - it is a term that covers over 100 medical conditions. Osteoarthritis (OA) is the most common form of arthritis and generally affects elderly patients. Some forms of arthritis can affect people at a very early age.



Types of Arthritis

There are over 100 types of arthritis. Here is a description of some common ones, together with the causes:

Osteoarthritis - cartilage loses its elasticity. If the cartilage is stiff it becomes damaged more easily. The cartilage, which acts as a shock absorber, will gradually wear away in some areas. As the cartilage becomes damaged tendons and ligaments become stretched, causing pain. Eventually the bones may rub against each other causing very severe pain.

Rheumatoid arthritis - this is an inflammatory form of arthritis. The synovial membrane (synovium) is attacked, resulting in swelling and pain. If left untreated the arthritis can lead to deformity. Rheumatoid arthritis is significantly more common in women than men and generally strikes when the patient is aged between 40 and 60. However, children and much older people may also be affected. Swedish scientists published their study in JAMA in October 2012, explaining that patients with rheumatoid arthritis have a higher risk of blood clots in the first ten years after diagnosis.

Infectious arthritis (septic arthritic) - an infection in the synovial fluid and tissues of a joint. It is usually caused by bacteria, but could also be caused by fungi or viruses.

Bacteria, fungi or viruses may spread through the bloodstream from infected tissue nearby, and infect a joint. Most susceptible people are those who already have some form of arthritis and develop an infection that travels in the bloodstream.

Juvenile rheumatoid arthritis (JRA) - means arthritis that affects a person aged 16 or less. JRA can be various forms of arthritis; it basically means that a child has it. There are three main types: [more](#)

1. Pauciarticular JRA, the most common and mildest. The child experiences pain in up to 4 joints.
2. Polyarticular JRA affects more joints and is more severe. As time goes by it tends to get worse.
3. Systemic JRA is the least common. Pain is experienced in many joints. It can spread to organs. This can be the most serious JRA.

What are the signs and symptoms of arthritis ?

The symptoms of arthritis depend on the type of arthritis, for example:

Osteoarthritis - The symptoms develop slowly and get worse as time goes by. There is pain in a joint, either during or after use, or after a period of inactivity. There will be tenderness when pressure is applied to the joint. The joint will be stiff, especially first thing in the morning. The patient may find it harder to use the joint - it loses its flexibility. Some patients experience a grating sensation when they use the joint. Hard lumps, or bone spurs may appear around the joint. In some cases the joint might swell. The most common affected joints are in the hips, hands, knees and spine.



Rheumatoid arthritis - The patient often finds the same joints in each side of the body are painfully swollen, inflamed, and stiff. The fingers, arms, legs and wrists are most commonly affected. Symptoms are usually worst on waking up in the morning and the stiffness can last for 30 minutes at this time. The joint is tender when touched. Hands may be red and puffy. There may be rheumatoid nodules (bumps of tissue under the skin of the patient's arms). Many patients with rheumatoid arthritis feel tired most of the time. Weight loss is common.



The smaller joints are usually noticeably affected first. Experts say patients

with rheumatoid arthritis have problems with several joints at the same time. As the arthritis progresses it spreads from the smaller joints in your hands, wrists, ankles and feet to your elbows, knees, hips, neck, shoulders and jaw.

Infectious arthritis - The patient has a fever, joint inflammation and swelling. He will feel tenderness and/or a sharp pain. Often these symptoms are linked to an injury or another illness. Most commonly affected areas are the knee, shoulder, elbow, wrist and finger. In the majority of cases, just one joint is affected.

Juvenile rheumatoid arthritis - The patient is a child. He will experience intermittent fevers which tend to peak in the evening and then suddenly disappear. His appetite will be poor and he will lose weight. There may be blotchy rashes on his arms and legs. Anemia is also common. The child may limp or have a sore wrist, finger, or knee. A joint may suddenly swell and stay larger than it usually is. The child may experience a stiff neck, hips or some other joint.

Physical therapy and occupational therapy for arthritis

Physical therapy and occupational therapy help maintain joint mobility and range of motion. How much therapy you need, and what kind of therapy will depend on many factors, such as the severity and type of arthritis you have, your age, and your general state of health. This has to be decided by you with your physician and physical or occupational therapist.

People with arthritis will often avoid moving the affected joint because of the pain. A physical therapist can help the patient work out the joint stiffness without damaging it. In order to perform your daily activity the physical therapist will help you achieve a good range of motion. This may involve building strength in the muscles that surround the affected joint - stronger muscles help stabilize a weakened joint. You will also be taught the best way to move from one position to another, as well as learning how to use such walking aids as crutches, a cane or a walker, if you need one.

Occupational therapy can teach you how to reduce the strain on your joints as you go about your daily activities. The occupational therapist can help you modify your home and workplace so that your movements do not aggravate your arthritis. You may need a splint for your hands or wrists, as well as aids for dressing, housekeeping, work activities, driving and washing/bathing yourself.

An occupational and/or physical therapist can make an enormous difference to your quality of life if you suffer from arthritis. He/she will help you learn more about your

arthritis, devise a dietary plan if you are overweight and overstressing the joints as a result, help you make better decisions about what shoes to buy if that part of the body is affected. You will learn how and when to rest - rest is crucial for treating inflammation and pain, especially when many joints are affected and you feel tired. Resting individual joints is very helpful too - custom splints can be made to rest and support affected joints.

Local pain can be relieved with ice packs or heating pads. Ultrasound and hot packs provide deep heat which relieves localized pain and relaxes muscle spasm around the affected joint. You may find that a warm bath/shower makes it easier for you to exercise afterwards.

Physical activity can improve arthritis symptoms - doctors warn that inactivity could harm the health of most patients with arthritis or some kind of rheumatic disease. Inactivity raises the risk of cardiovascular disease and diabetes type 2. Muscles become weaker with no exercise, joints become stiffer, and the patient's tolerance for pain decreases. Balance problems may also become worse.

9 Common Foods That Help Arthritis Pain

If you suffer from the pain and discomfort caused by arthritis, chances are you have relied on pain killers for relief at some point. You may be surprised to learn that there are natural ways to relieve the pain associated with arthritis. One such way is to eat certain foods that are believed to help significantly reduce arthritis pain. These foods contain properties that can reduce inflammation and help manage the disease. While no food can cure arthritis, you may see noticeable changes in your level of discomfort by simply adding these 9 common foods.

Vegetables Rich in Vitamin C

Many researchers now believe that individuals who consume a diet that is deficient in vitamin C are at a greater risk for developing certain types of arthritis. Eating vegetables that have high vitamin C content can help to build collagen. Collagen is a key component in cartilage, which helps to cushion your joints. Vegetables rich in vitamin C include:

- Sweet peppers (green, yellow, and red)
- Broccoli
- Kale



- Brussels Sprouts
- Cauliflower
- Mustard greens
- Red cabbage
- White potatoes (skin intact)

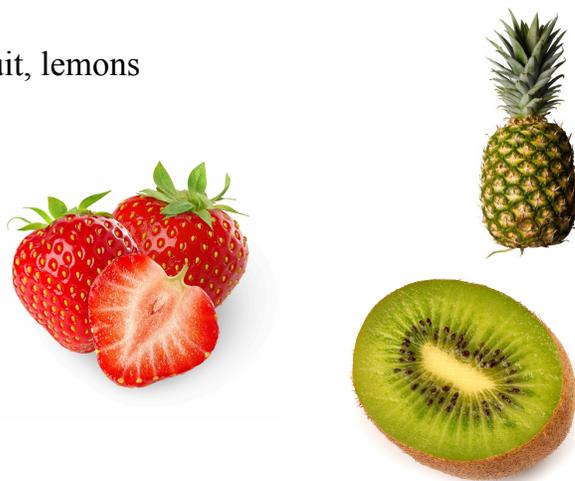


Fruits Rich in Vitamin C

Vegetables are not the only type of produce that can offer pain relieving benefits for those suffering from arthritis. It is also beneficial to eat fruits that are high in vitamin C. Not only do fruits with plenty of vitamin C help to build collagen for healthy cartilage between joints, they also may help the body ward off other illness due to their high antioxidant levels. (To learn more about foods with antioxidants, read [10 Antioxidant-Rich Foods To Protect Your Body.](#))

Many have heard that vitamin C helps boost your immune system, but research shows that components in natural sources of vitamin C also help decrease inflammation in the body and protect against certain types of cancer. If you want to add extra vitamin C to your diet try and stick with food sources rather than supplements, as supplements may not contain the necessary plant nutrients needed to obtain optimal benefits from the vitamin. Fruits rich in vitamin C include:

- Citrus fruits like oranges, grapefruit, lemons
- Strawberries
- Pineapple
- Papaya
- Kiwi
- Mango



Fruits and Vegetables Rich in Carotenoids

Carotenoids are a type of nutrient that is found in many fruits and vegetables. These powerful antioxidants come in many varieties, the most well know being beta-carotene. When referring to arthritis, the most beneficial carotenoid is beta-cryptoxanthin. Beta-cryptoxanthin may help to reduce the swelling and inflammation associated with certain types of arthritis, such as rheumatoid arthritis. Fruits and vegetables rich in carotenoids include:

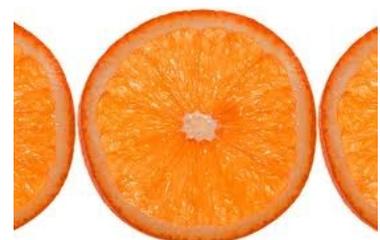
- Sweet potatoes
- Carrots
- Butternut squash
- Kale
- Pumpkin
- Mustard greens
- Turnip greens
- Cantaloupe
- Apricots
- Spinach
- Sweet red peppers



Foods Rich In Carotenoid Beta-Cryptoxanthin Include:

Winter squash

- Persimmons
- Pumpkin
- Papaya
- Tangerines



- Red peppers

- Oranges

- Corn

- Apricots



Berries

Most berries contain an abundance of bioflavonoids. Bioflavonoids such as quercetin and anthocyanidins are antioxidants with anti-inflammatory effects. Quercetin acts as a natural non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medication similar to aspirin or ibuprofen. In addition, anthocyanidin helps to reduce inflammation as well. Both antioxidants have been proven to decrease the chemicals in our bodies that cause inflammation. The bioflavonoids, quercetin and anthocyanidins can be found in berries. Berries containing bioflavonoids include:

- Blueberries

- Black currants

- Lingo berries

- Blackberries

- Elderberries

- Raspberries

- Boysenberries

- Strawberries



Fish High In Omega-3 Fatty Acids

Omega-3 fatty acids found in foods such as salmon and other fish can help to decrease the pain and inflammation of arthritis. Omega-3 fatty acids are a type of polyunsaturated fat. Research shows that omega-3 fatty acids can help arthritis sufferers by decreasing the

production of cytokines, an enzyme that wears away cartilage. Fish rich in Omega-3 Fatty acids include:

- Salmon
- Herring
- Mackerel (with the exception of king mackerel)
- Rainbow trout
- Anchovies
- Sardines
- Pacific oysters



Green Tea

Green tea is one of the most consumed beverages in the world. Many people are familiar with the fact that green tea contains antioxidants that can benefit their health. The antioxidants in green tea can also reduce the pain caused by inflammation due to arthritis. Green tea contains epigallocatechin-3-gallate or EGCG, which can lower the body's production of substances that cause inflammation in the joints and joint damage from arthritis. Choose caffeinated green tea over decaf, as decaffeinated green tea has less of the beneficial nutrients than the caffeinated version.

