

CDC Battles Osteoarthritis with New Public Health Agenda



Nearly 27 million Americans have Osteoarthritis (OA), a painful and potentially life-altering joint disease affecting mainly the hands, knees and hips. CDC and the Arthritis Foundation in collaboration with 75 partners recently released, *A National Public Health Agenda for Osteoarthritis*, a new agenda to battle this disease. The goal of the new public health agenda is to:

- Ensure all Americans have access to proven public health interventions to manage their OA;
- Establish policies, communication initiatives, and strategic alliances for OA prevention and management; and
- Initiate research to better understand the burden of OA, its risk factors, and effective intervention strategies.

CDC is committed to the growing issue of osteoarthritis and will continue its work to lead the way to promoting key solutions that will improve the lives of those living with OA and those having other chronic diseases such as heart disease, high blood pressure, or diabetes in addition to OA.

“Implementation of the recommendations paves the way, not only for an expanded public health role in combating arthritis’ effect on our health system and economy, but also in addressing disability and quality of life, particularly for people who must manage multiple chronic diseases such as OA in addition to diabetes, obesity or heart disease,” says Dr. Wayne Giles, Director of the Division of Adult and Community Health for the CDC.

Know Your Risk. 46 million people are affected with arthritis. The prevalence of arthritis will reach 67 million by 2030, and OA, the most common form of arthritis, will account for most of that. It is estimated that 1 in 2 people will get some form of OA in their lifetime. With the combination of the aging population, increased life expectancy of Americans and the obesity epidemic, the rising prevalence of OA is expected to contribute even more heavily to the severe health and economic effects already present. OA often causes weakness and disability, interferes with work productivity, and results in joint replacement.

Be Aware of OA Risk Factors. A recent community study estimated that the lifetime risk of developing knee osteoarthritis serious enough to cause symptoms is 45 percent. Risk for knee OA increases to 57 percent among people with a past knee injury. Lifetime risk for knee osteoarthritis also goes up with increased weight, with 3 in 5 people who are obese at risk. Many people with OA are not being proactive because of the misconception that arthritis is an inevitable part of aging and that the aches and pains are simply something you must learn to live with.

Adopt a Healthy Lifestyle. Many people with OA also suffer from other chronic illnesses such as diabetes, high blood pressure, and heart disease, for which physical activity and maintaining a healthy weight are also recommended. Approximately 50 percent of all people with diabetes also have some form of arthritis. Over half of all adults with heart disease have arthritis. Because of this, it is especially important that people with arthritis, especially those with OA (which can be weight-related), include the recommended amounts of physical activity as a part of their lifestyle.

Get Moving. Research shows that the presence of OA and arthritis in general, may be a barrier to physical activity among those who have the disease. This is particularly significant given that physical activity is one major, non-pharmacological way to effectively reduce arthritis symptoms such as pain and loss of function. Though people who have OA may be hesitant to exercise, routine exercise is recommended for them both in the *National Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans* and in *A National Public Health Agenda for Osteoarthritis*.

Get Help. CDC and the Arthritis Foundation suggest several physical activity and self-management education programs that are both proven to be effective and highly recommended for people with arthritis who need special information about exercising safely. A complete listing of these programs and more information about them may be found by visiting: <http://www.cdc.gov/arthritis/interventions.htm>.

Currently these programs reach only about 1 percent of the population. The OA agenda was formulated, partly to direct public health activities to help close this gap and make the evidence-based programs more readily available to the people who can benefit from them. You should also check out www.arthritis.org, where you can learn about simple steps you can take to reduce pain, increase mobility and slow the progression of their arthritis. The site includes a self-assessment quiz, movement tracker, live twitter feed, community forums and blogs, program and event locator and campaign materials.