

# Arthritis

## How CDC Improves Quality of Life for People With Arthritis

In the United States, 23% of all adults, or more than 54 million people, have arthritis. It is a leading cause of work disability, with annual costs for medical care and lost earnings of \$303.5 billion.

The most common form of arthritis is osteoarthritis. Other forms include gout, rheumatoid arthritis, and lupus. Symptoms of arthritis are pain, aching, stiffness, and swelling in or around the joints. Rheumatoid arthritis and lupus can affect multiple organs and cause widespread symptoms.

Sixty percent of US adults with arthritis are of working age (18 to 64 years). Arthritis can limit the type of work they are able to do or keep them from working at all. In fact, 8 million working-age adults report that their ability to work is limited because of their arthritis. For example, they may have a hard time climbing stairs or walking from a parking deck to their workplace.

CDC conducts research and supports programs for people with arthritis so they can work and do other daily activities, have less pain, manage their own care, and prevent or delay disability.

### Measuring How Many People Are Affected by Arthritis

CDC's Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System and National Health Interview Survey collect data on the number and percentage of adults who have arthritis, whether the numbers or percentages are going up or down, and how the disease affects people's quality of life. CDC's [Arthritis Program](#) uses these data to help guide public health decisions about the best ways to help adults with arthritis.

### Promoting Interventions That Reduce Arthritis Pain

CDC recognizes several proven ways to help people manage arthritis symptoms:

- **Participate in a self-management education program**, such as the [Chronic Disease Self-Management Program](#), that teaches the skills and confidence to live well with arthritis every day.

### In the United States:



**1 IN 4 ADULTS**  
has arthritis.



**1 IN 4 ADULTS**  
with arthritis reports  
severe joint pain.



**\$303.5 BILLION**  
is the cost of arthritis  
each year in medical  
spending and lost wages.





- **Be active.** Physical activity—such as walking, bicycling, and swimming—decreases arthritis pain and improves function, mood, and quality of life. Adults with arthritis should move more and sit less throughout the day. Getting at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity each week is recommended. However, any physical activity is better than none. [CDC-recognized physical activity programs](#) can safely improve health for participants with arthritis.
- **Maintain a healthy weight.** People can reduce their risk of knee osteoarthritis by controlling their weight.
- **Protect your joints.** People can help prevent osteoarthritis by avoiding activities that are more likely to cause joint injuries.
- **Talk with a doctor.** Recommendations from health care providers can motivate people to be physically active and join a self-management education program. People with inflammatory arthritis, such as rheumatoid arthritis, have a better quality of life if they are diagnosed early, receive treatment, and learn how to manage their condition.

### Increasing Access and Use of Interventions That Work

Thirteen states use CDC funding to expand the reach of proven arthritis self-management education and physical activity programs and sustain them over time. States also use CDC funding to increase health care provider counseling about the benefits of physical activity for arthritis management, promote walking, and encourage referral of patients with arthritis to proven intervention programs.

For example, in the state of New Hampshire, in 2019, musculoskeletal conditions (including lower back pain, joint pain and osteoarthritis) cost the state \$22.1 million in insurance claims. In response, the New Hampshire Arthritis Program partnered with Anthem Blue Cross, Blue Shield and the state Department of Administrative Services to offer Walk With Ease Self-Directed and Self-Directed Enhanced programs to all state employees, retirees, and dependents.

CDC also works with national organizations to expand the use of these [proven interventions](#) for adults with arthritis. For example, the National Recreation and Park Association has supported local park agencies in 48 states and American Samoa to deliver the Arthritis Foundation Exercise Program, Active Living Every Day, Fit & Strong!, or Walk With Ease Program.

In addition, the Osteoarthritis Action Alliance (OAAA) has increased accessibility and availability of Walk With Ease Self-Directed (WWE SD) in all 50 states by creating a [WWE SD Portal](#), which encourages adults to participate in the program at their own pace. OAAA has also collaborated with partners to develop [A National Public Health Agenda for Osteoarthritis: 2020 Update](#).

Funded states and national organizations have reached over 200,000 adults with these programs.