

Alliance Handshake

April 2018

Many of us suffer from painful, stiff joints and wonder “*Do I Have Arthritis*”? This question can only be answered by your doctor. Many older people accept joint pain as a part of aging that can’t be avoided. They don’t talk to their doctor because they assume nothing can be done about it. Myths, like those, can pass from generation to generation, even though they aren’t true. And younger people with joint pain, swelling or stiffness might not even consider arthritis. They would be surprised to learn that people of any age can get arthritis, even children. In recent years scientists have made rapid progress in understanding the many causes of arthritis; they have also made significant strides in developing effective new treatments for many forms of the disease. In this newsletter we will explore what arthritis is, some common types of arthritis, signs and symptoms that mean you should see your doctor, how it is diagnosed and treated, how to best live with it, and others.

William Van Ry, Owner & CEO

Memory Game



It is very important to exercise the mind as well as the body. With each edition of our newsletter, we will include a memory word game for you to complete.

Word Game



Last issues word: **DIETARY**

dairy diet irate tidy trey
dare dire edit tied triad
dart dirt tardy tier tried
date dirty tare tirade adit
dater drat tear tire aery
dear dray teary trade aide
deity dyer teral tread aired
diary idea tide tray airy
arid arty raid rate rayed
read ready ride rite yard
yare year yeti

The average is 32 words. Did you meet or beat this standard?

Can you find 40 words within this issue’s word **MYSTICAL**?



Arthritis is one of the most common diseases nationwide.

What exactly is arthritis? “*Arthr*” means joint, and “*itis*” means inflammation—heat, swelling, and redness. But the inflammation of arthritis isn’t always something you can see. There are over 100 types of arthritis. While their symptoms can be similar, their underlying causes vary. People of any age, sex, and race can and do have arthritis. It is the leading cause of disability in America.

Osteoarthritis is the most common type of arthritis. It’s far more common than rheumatoid arthritis. Osteoarthritis is caused by wear and tear on your joints. It occurs when cartilage, the tissue that cushions the ends of the bones within the joints, breaks down and wears away. It most often affects fingers, knees, and hips. Osteoarthritis can follow injury to a joint. For example, years after a soccer injury to a knee, you might get osteoarthritis in the knee.

For the most part, researchers don’t know a lot about how and why osteoarthritis occurs. Women tend to get it more often than men. You tend to get it as you get older. Many treatments are available for osteoarthritis. Your doctor can tell you about exercises that can help and activities you should avoid. Several pain and anti-inflammatory medicines are available by prescription and over the

counter. Perhaps the most promising treatments for osteoarthritis right now involve ways to block pain. Researchers are working on other approaches as well, including exercise routines and devices that alter the alignment of joints. For severe cases of osteoarthritis there are surgeries to replace joints.

Gout is another type of arthritis. Gout usually affects the big toe, but other joints may be involved. It is caused by needle-like crystals that build up in the joints. People with gout might try avoiding certain foods – including liver, anchovies and meat gravy – because they can bring on a gout attack in some people. These foods are rich in “purines” which break down in your body and can ultimately contribute to making crystals. Other things that may make gout worse include drinking alcohol, being overweight, and taking certain medications. Your doctor might do blood tests and X-rays to find out if you have gout. Gout can be treated several ways.

A very different type of arthritis is called ***rheumatoid arthritis***. In rheumatoid arthritis, your immune system—which normally protects your body from infection and disease - starts mistakenly attacking your own joints. This causes pain, swelling, stiffness, and loss of function in joints and bones throughout the body. Unlike osteoarthritis and gout which just affect certain joints, rheumatoid arthritis can affect your whole body. In addition to

systems, eyes, heart, or skin. You might feel sick or tired or have a fever. Anyone can get rheumatoid arthritis. The disease most often begins in middle age or later. But it can occur at any age. Even children sometimes get a similar form of arthritis – juvenile rheumatoid arthritis.

There is no cure for rheumatoid arthritis. There are effective treatments that can relieve pain, reduce joint stiffness and swelling, and prevent further damage. Many of the drugs like anti-inflammatory drugs and steroids, work by reducing inflammation. Such drugs may be used in combination with others that have been shown to slow joint destruction. The outcomes of treating rheumatoid arthritis have improved in the past 10-20 years. Doctors no longer wait to start treating a person with rheumatoid arthritis. Now, they know to begin treatment right away – before joint damage worsens. Early detection is very important to increase the chance that treatment is successful.

Rheumatoid arthritis can affect virtually every area of your life, from work to relationships. There are many things one can do to help maintain lifestyle and keep a positive attitude. Exercise helps keep muscles healthy and strong, preserve joint mobility, and maintain flexibility. Rest helps to reduce joint inflammation, pain, and fatigue. New research advances continue to help improve quality of life for people with rheumatoid arthritis so they can lead a full, active, and independent life.

Psoriatic Arthritis can occur in people who have psoriasis (scaly red and white patches). It affects the skin, joints, and areas

joints, it may affect internal organs and where tissues attach to bone.

Inflammation and Stiffness: The Hallmarks of Arthritis

How do you know if your inflammation and stiffness means you have arthritis? Only a health care professional can tell for sure, but certain signs usually point to arthritis. There are four important warning signs that should prompt you to talk to your doctor.

➤ Pain

Pain from arthritis may come and go or it can be constant. It may occur when you are resting or while you are moving. Pain may be in one part of the body or in many different parts.

➤ Swelling

Some types of arthritis cause the skin over the affected joint to become red and swollen, feeling warm to the touch. Swelling that lasts for three days or longer or occurs more than three times a month should prompt a visit to your doctor.

➤ Stiffness

This is a classic arthritis symptom, especially when waking up in the morning or after sitting at a desk or riding in a car for a long time. Morning stiffness that lasts longer than an hour is good reason to suspect arthritis.

➤ Difficulty moving a joint

It shouldn't be that hard or painful to get up from your favorite chair. Your experience with inflammation and stiffness will be important in helping your doctor pin down

symptoms for a few weeks, noting what is swollen and stiff, when, for how long, and what helps ease the symptoms.

Diagnosing Arthritis

If you have joint problems you want quick answers...you want to know what's wrong and how it can be fixed. The signs and symptoms that lead people to the exam room are typically the joint pain, swelling, and stiffness. Some times unexplained fatigue and a lingering sense of illness are problems too. If you are having joint symptoms that cause concern, an appointment with your primary care doctor is a good place to start. But sometimes arthritis is difficult to diagnose. You may need to see a rheumatologist – a doctor specializing in arthritis. They are trained to make difficult diagnoses and to treat all types of arthritis.

the type and extent of arthritis. Before visiting your doctor keep track of your ***6 Habits for Managing Arthritis***

- ***Be Organized.*** Take charge of your treatment plan. Track symptoms, pain level, meds and any side effects so you can discuss with your doctor.
- ***Manage Pain and Fatigue.*** Don't allow pain or fatigue to overwhelm you. Combine your meds with non-medical pain management techniques.
- ***Stay Active.*** Even though exercise may be the last thing you want to do, it is beneficial for managing arthritis.
- ***Balance Activity with Rest.*** Lighten your schedule, ask for help when needed, pace yourself and take breaks!
- ***Eat a Healthy Balanced Diet.***
- ***Improve Sleep.*** Dark, cool, quiet bedroom. Avoid evening caffeine and exercise. Try a warm bath.

The logo features the word "Alliance" in a large, bold, black serif font. To the right of "Alliance" is the word "Handshake" in a smaller, white, sans-serif font. The text is set against a background of vertical grey lines of varying thicknesses, creating a textured effect. A small silhouette of two people shaking hands is integrated into the letter "i" of "Alliance".

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