



SENIOR HEALTH

Arthritis

TIPS FOR COPING

TYPES OF ARTHRITIS

► **Osteoarthritis**

The most common form of arthritis for people over age 40 is osteoarthritis. This type of arthritis often begins with soreness or an aching pain when a joint is moved. The cartilage between the bones and the joints breaks down and the joint tissue wears away. Osteoarthritis most often affects the weight-bearing joints (knees, hips and lower back). Medications, physical therapy, exercise and surgery may relieve some pain.

► **Rheumatoid Arthritis**

This type of arthritis occurs when the lining of the joint becomes inflamed and thickened, making joints stiff and painful to move. It may occur in any joint, but the wrists, ankles, knees and toes are most affected. Rheumatoid arthritis is one of the more disabling forms of arthritis. It can occur at any age and it affects women three times more than men. If undetected or left untreated, the joints may become deformed and loss of movement may result.

► **Gout**

Gout occurs most often in older men. Uric acid, a substance that normally circulates through the blood and passes out of the body by way of the kidneys, can build up in the joints, irritating and inflaming the joint lining. Gout often occurs in the toes, ankles, elbows, wrists and hands. Swelling causes the skin to pull tightly around the joint, and the area becomes red or purple and very tender. Medications can stop a gout attack and prevent damage to the joints.

TIPS FOR RELIEF

► **Lose weight.** The more overweight you are, the more stress and pressure you put on your joints.

► **Exercise daily.** Strengthening muscles helps protect joints and keeps them flexible. Walking, bicycling and swimming are easy on the joints.

► **Pace yourself.** Do a little each day to avoid becoming tired and sore.

► **Apply a muscle ointment** to your problem areas before you go to bed to alleviate morning stiffness.

► **Use cold treatment,** such as ice, to prevent pain, especially when a joint has been overused or overworked. Apply a cold compress for 15 to 20 minutes, then remove it for 10 to 15 minutes. This can be repeated as needed.

► **Talk to your doctor about vitamin therapy.** People with rheumatoid arthritis are often deficient in Vitamin C.
