

Arthritis and Your Health Self-Management Plan

- Follow a healthy lifestyle.
- Eat a nutrient-rich and nutritionally adequate diet appropriate for your unique needs.
- Follow your health care provider's direction regarding medicine(s).
- Maintain adequate hydration to ensure nutrients can move where they are needed most in your body.

Green Flags—All Clear



If you have:

- Do exercises to help strengthen your muscles and potentially stimulate cartilage growth.
- Can do your daily activities.

What this means ...

- Good work—your symptoms are under control.

Keep up the great work!

Yellow Flags—Caution



If you have:

- Joint pain that interferes with your daily activities
- Pain that is not normal for you and does not go away with common pain-relieving medicine(s)
- Increased muscle weakness, particularly muscles around your knee or ankle
- Increased swelling in your joints
- Reduced ability to move your joints

What this means ...

- You may have an arthritis flare-up, or your arthritis treatment plan may need to be changed.
- You may benefit from a physical therapist evaluation.

Call your health care provider if symptoms do not improve.

Name:

Number:

If you notice a Yellow Flag, work closely with your health care team.

Red Flags—Stop and Think



If you have:

- Notice a sudden loss of mobility, including an inability to walk or to bear weight
- Have a fall associated with pain
- Have a fever, noted redness, or new joint swelling

What this means ...

- You need to be evaluated by a health care professional immediately.

If possible, notify your health care provider's office.

Name:

Number:

If you notice a Red Flag, call your health care provider.

Arthritis Fast Facts

- Arthritis is a joint disease that mostly affects cartilage. There is more than one type, including rheumatoid arthritis, osteoarthritis, psoriatic arthritis, gout (metabolic arthritis), and infectious arthritis.
- Arthritis affects only the joints, not the internal organs. People have joint pain and reduced motion.
- Arthritis often occurs with other conditions that are inflammatory in nature, such as diabetes, heart disease, and high blood pressure. If you have one of these chronic conditions or are at risk for developing them (e.g., due to family history), adequate nutrition (healthy foods), regular body movement, and other lifestyle supports are critically important to ensuring management and prevention.
- Arthritis usually develops over time. Risk factors include aging, joint injury, joints that are not properly formed, a genetic defect in joint cartilage, joint stress from certain jobs and playing sports and, for some, not being a healthy weight.
- Arthritis can occur in any joint; however, it occurs most often in the hands, knees, hips, and spine.
- Warning signs include stiffness in a joint after getting out of bed or sitting for a long time, swelling or tenderness in one or more joints, or a crunching feeling or the sound of bone rubbing on bone.

What can you do?

- Talk with your health care provider about what treatment plans are right for you.
- The purpose of treatment goals is to improve joint function, control pain, and achieve a healthy lifestyle. Goals may include movement, physical activity, achieving a healthy balanced diet, getting rest and joint care, non-drug pain relief techniques to control pain, medicines, complementary and alternative therapies and/or surgery.
- Physical activity programs include any movement. Walking, even for brief periods, can be helpful. You may need to start by walking short distances every other day. Gradually increase your time and distance. The key is doing joyful body movement, managing, and preventing joint discomfort, and maintaining a healthy lifestyle. Look for programs that will work best for you, including those that focus on muscle strength, balance, and mobility.
- Consider enrolling in a self-directed or community evidence-based and/or evidence-informed program that supports chronic disease or pain management (like Chronic Pain Self-Management, Diabetes Self-Management, and Arthritis Self-Management programs). These programs can help you understand the disease, reduce pain while staying active, copy with your body, mind, and emotions, and live an active, independent life.
- Connect to social resources, alternative and complimentary therapies.
- Take medicines only as prescribed.
- Maintain a good healthy attitude:
 1. Focus on what you can do instead of what you cannot do.
 2. Focus on your strengths, not weaknesses.
 3. Take your daily activities and break them down into small tasks.
 4. Include healthy eating and physical activity as part of your daily routine.
 5. Think about ways to manage stress.
 6. Balance activity with rest periods.
 7. Develop a support network of family, friends, and your health care team.

Aging and Disability Services

Aging and Disability Services (ADS)—the Area Agency on Aging for King County—plans, coordinates, and advocates for comprehensive services for older adults, family caregivers, and people with disabilities throughout Seattle and King County. For information about services or interpretation assistance, call 844-348-5464 or e-mail

info@communitylivingconnections.org.



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