



Arthritis: Debunking the Myths

Myth 1 “Arthritis is a disease of the elderly.”

Arthritis affects people of all ages. It is the leading cause of disability for people over the age of 15. Nearly 4.5 million adults in Canada are diagnosed with arthritis, and three out of five people with arthritis are under age 65. Arthritis is also among the most common chronic diseases in children, affecting one in 1,000 of them.

Myth 2 “Arthritis is a single disease.”

There are more than 100 different types of arthritis. It may affect only a single joint, multiple joints, or it can be an auto-immune disease that attacks the whole body. Different types of arthritis include osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, lupus, gout and ankylosing spondylitis.

Myth 3 “Arthritis is just aches and pains.”

Arthritis is a leading cause of pain, physical disability and health-care utilization in Canada. It can make even daily activities, such as getting dressed, opening a door or even walking up the stairs, extremely difficult or impossible. Inflammatory forms of the disease can cause the destruction of joints and soft tissues around the joints, leading to pain, disability, loss of quality of life, and in severe cases, early death.

Myth 4 “Arthritis isn’t a big deal.”

Arthritis is among the top three chronic diseases in Canada and can be devastating, disabling and fatal. Arthritis hurts our families and our economy, costing more than \$4 billion annually in health-care expenses and lost work days. In fact, as one of Canada’s most costly chronic conditions, it disables two to three times more workers than all other chronic conditions.

Myth 5 “Arthritis research receives the right amount of funding compared to how many people are affected by it.”

Although arthritis is one of the most common, debilitating and costly chronic diseases in Canada, arthritis research receives much less research funding than many other chronic diseases. The Canadian Institutes of Health Research spent \$19 million on arthritis-related research in 2005-2006, representing just \$4.30 for every person with arthritis. For comparison, diabetes research received three times as much funding (or about \$12.83) per person with diabetes; cancer research received 32 times as much funding (or about \$138.60) per person with cancer; and HIV-AIDS research received 139 times as much funding (or about \$598.40) per person with a positive HIV-AIDS test. More funding for arthritis research is critical for researchers to better understand how to prevent, treat and find a cure for arthritis.



Arthritis Facts

Who has arthritis?

- Arthritis can strike anyone at anytime, regardless of age, physical condition or ethnic background.
- Nearly three of every five people with arthritis are under the age of 65.
- Nearly 4.5 million, or one in six, Canadians aged 15 years and older report having arthritis and arthritis-related conditions.
- Arthritis affects more Canadian adults than diabetes, cancer, heart disease, asthma or spinal cord trauma.

Costs of arthritis

- Arthritis costs more than \$4.4 billion annually in health-care expenses and lost work days.
- Arthritis is the leading cause of work disability in Canada.
- In rheumatoid arthritis, research shows rates of work disability are remarkably high. Approximately two out of three (66%) people with rheumatoid arthritis have experienced short term or long term loss of ability to work due to their disease.

Physical activity and arthritis

- Although two-thirds of Canadians with arthritis believe that physical activity poses the risk of aggravating their symptoms, physical activity is a key prevention strategy for chronic diseases like arthritis.
- Weight management is critical to arthritis. Losing 10 pounds of excess weight translates into a decrease in stress on the knees by 40 pounds.
- More than 80% of hip and knee joint replacement surgeries are caused by arthritis.
- Appropriate physical activity has been shown to reduce pain for people with arthritis.

Funding research

- Canada is a global leader in arthritis research. Sustained research efforts account for why people with arthritis now have many treatment options – including surgery and medication – to manage their condition. These treatments, however, do not work for everyone, treatments can stop being effective and there can be side effects. Not all people can access the treatments they need.
- The Canadian Institutes of Health Research spent \$19 million – a comparatively small sum – on arthritis related research in 2005-2006. That is about \$4.30 for every adult living with arthritis in Canada, significantly less than for many other diseases. For comparison:
 - Diabetes research receives about \$12.83 per person with diabetes (3 times as much)
 - Cancer research receives about \$138.60 per person with cancer (32 times as much)
 - HIV-AIDS research receives about \$598.40 per person with a positive HIV-AIDS test (139 times as much)

Its time Canadians refuse to take “no cure” for an answer. For more information about arthritis and the “Arthritis is cured!” program, visit us at www.ArthritisIsCured.org.