

# Living Well with Arthritis



## **Helping Farmers and Ranchers Take Control of Arthritis**

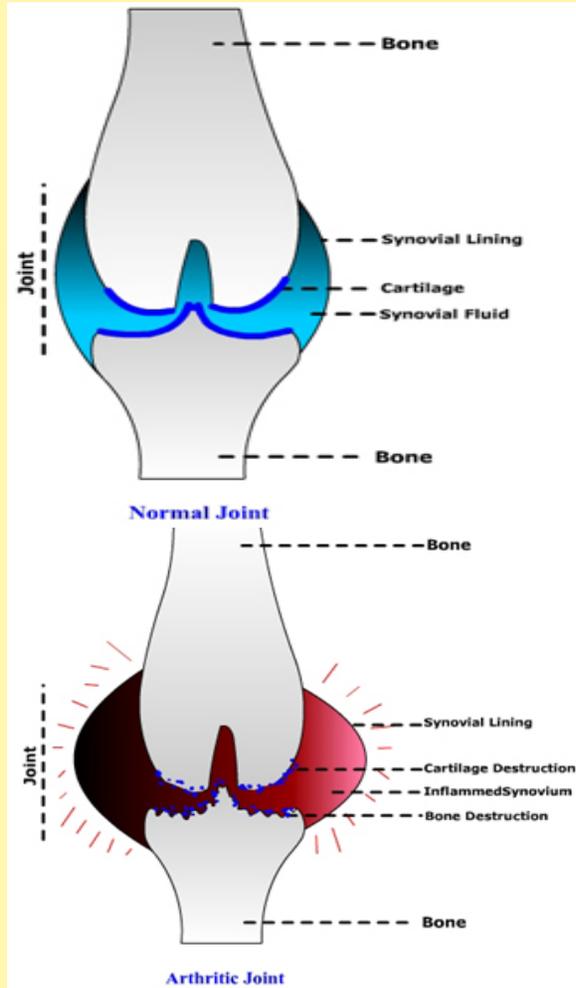
Developed by the  
Arthritis Foundation, Rocky Mountain Chapter



# Arthritis: The Facts

- The leading cause of disability in the US (more than cancer, stroke, or heart disease)
- Currently affects over 46 million people including over 300,000 children
- Farmers and ranchers are at increased risk for arthritis

# What is Arthritis?



- “Arthritis” means “inflammation of a joint”
- Arthritis can result in swelling, redness, and loss of motion
- The term describes more than 100 different conditions that affect the joints, muscles and tendons, and sometimes even the skin, internal organs, and other parts of the body



## Mistaken Beliefs about Arthritis

### Myth #1

- *Arthritis only affects the elderly*

Many people think that arthritis can't be avoided, that it is an inevitable part of getting older. As the following statistics reveal, this simply isn't true.



# The Truth about Arthritis

## Fact #1

- Arthritis can happen at any age to anyone, even children
- Over 300 million people all over the world have some form of arthritis
- Two-thirds of those people are under the age of 65
- Arthritis is the most common long-term condition for people over the age of 15
- Several kinds of arthritis strike women in their childbearing years





## Mistaken Beliefs about Arthritis Myth #2

- *Arthritis isn't serious, it's only minor aches and pains*

People often think that arthritis is just a few aches and pains that can be handled with a couple of aspirin. Nothing could be farther from the truth.



## The Truth about Arthritis Fact #2

- Arthritis is the nation's leading cause of disability
- This disease costs the American economy over \$86 billion a year in medical bills, lost wages, and days absent from work
- Certain forms of arthritis decrease life expectancy from 8 to 15 years compared to people without the disease



## Mistaken Beliefs about Arthritis

### Myth #3

- *There's nothing that can be done to treat arthritis*

Most people think that nothing can be done to help with arthritis. This is a discouraging belief for those dealing with the disease. Fortunately, it's not true.



# The Truth about Arthritis

## Fact #3

- An early and accurate diagnosis can minimize the effects of arthritis
- There are medications on the market that can treat arthritis and help reduce the pain and improve range of motion
- Learning about the disease can help you make the best choices for your healthcare and your lifestyle so your quality of life remains high
- Proper nutrition and exercise can make it much easier to deal with arthritis. Learning what's best for your particular kind of arthritis will give you some control over the symptoms

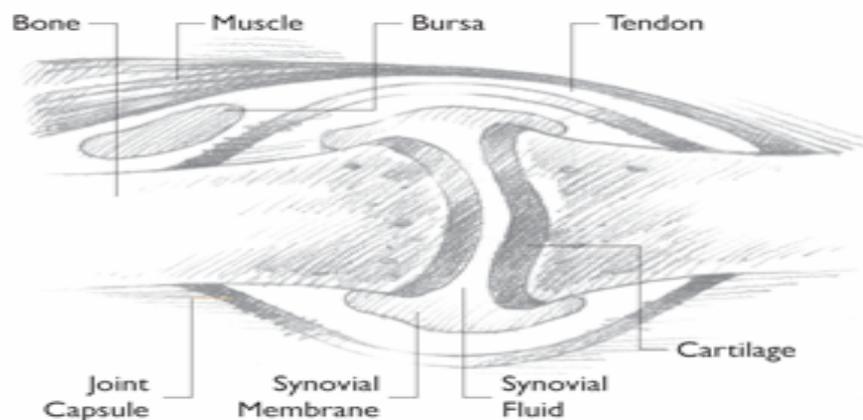


## Common Forms of Arthritis Affecting Farmers & Ranchers

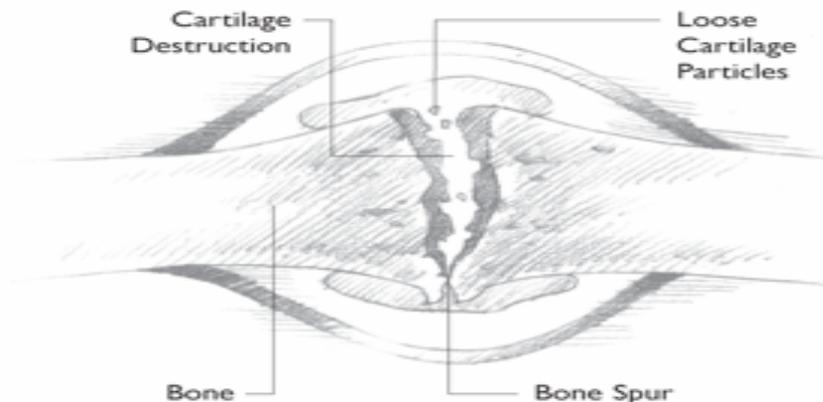
- Osteoarthritis
- Rheumatoid Arthritis
- Bursitis and Tendonitis



# Osteoarthritis



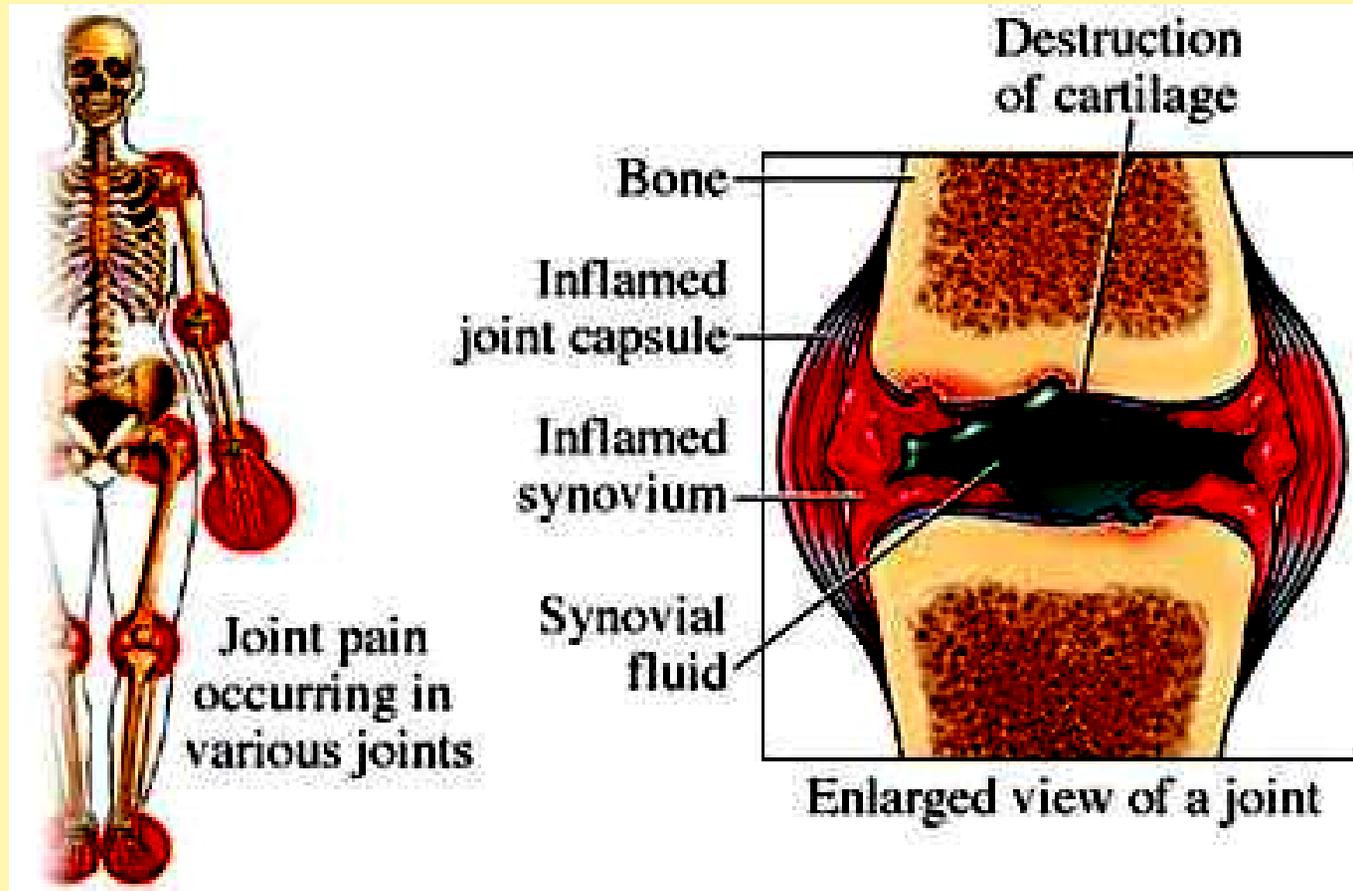
**NORMAL JOINT**



**JOINT WITH OSTEOARTHRITIS**

- The “wear and tear” form of arthritis
- Due to injury, overuse, or misuse of joints
- Family history can also be a factor
- Being overweight adds to the risk
- Affects hips, knees, feet, spine, shoulders, elbows, finger joints, base of thumb, and big toe
- Many farming and ranching chores can set the stage for osteoarthritis

# Rheumatoid Arthritis





# Rheumatoid Arthritis

- “Systemic” disease – it involves the whole body
- Can affect many joints, and can even affect internal organs
- If untreated, RA can damage joints and cause severe deformity, leading to disability
- Can sometimes cause fatigue, fever, and general aches and pains
- Generally affects joints on both sides of the body
- Some people have constant symptoms, while others experience ups and downs, or “flares” and good periods called remissions



# Bursitis and Tendonitis

- Painful conditions that usually last a short time and don't cause permanent damage
- Bursitis is inflammation of the bursa
- Tendonitis is inflammation of a tendon
- Farmers and ranchers may develop these conditions through stressing muscles or tendons with activities like too much lifting, carrying or throwing, or constantly gripping and manipulating controls on farm equipment.
- “Milker’s knee” is a form of bursitis
- Sudden shock from frequently jumping off equipment can lead to joint damage and inflammation





# What Can You Do About Arthritis?



- Most important step to take is to get set up with a doctor who is trained to design your treatment program.
- If possible, meet with a rheumatologist (doctor who specializes in arthritis)
- Learn how to use both heat and cold treatments to help relieve pain
- Begin using the 3 kinds of exercise that can help your joints and the muscles that support them:
  - Range of Motion
  - Strengthening exercises
  - Fitness or endurance exercises



## More Ways to Help Yourself

- Exercise in warm water
- Work with your doctor to identify the best medications for the kind of arthritis you are dealing with, and take those medications exactly as your doctor instructs
- Learn effective ways to manage and reduce stress. The Arthritis Foundation can give you some great ideas



Arthritis Foundation  
**Aquatic Program**<sup>™</sup>

 **ARTHRITIS**  
FOUNDATION<sup>®</sup>  
Take Control. We Can Help.<sup>™</sup>

# Foods That Can Hurt

- Many popular foods can actually increase inflammation and pain, and should be avoided.
- These include but are not limited to: foods you may be allergic to, which might include
  - **Foods you may be allergic to, which might include *milk, shellfish, peanuts, chocolate, food dyes, and others;***
  - **“Bad” fats including *meat, poultry, hydrogenated oils, trans fats, butter, corn oil, peanut oil;***
  - **And acidic foods, including *alcohol, coffee, animal products, sugar, cashew nuts, white flour and several others.***
- The Arthritis Foundation can provide a list of the foods that might increase your pain, so you can avoid them and start feeling better.





# Ways to Protect Your Joints

- There are ways to do your work without adding unnecessary physical stress that can cause more damage.
- Some examples:
  - avoid gripping objects tightly for very long;
  - consider building up handles or control levers on tractors and combines with padding to provide more surface area so you won't have to grip them as tightly;
  - learn how to lift correctly to protect your joints and to stay strong and productive.



## Simplify Your Work

Changing your tasks slightly can make them easier to do.

**Ask yourself these questions regarding your frequent chores:**

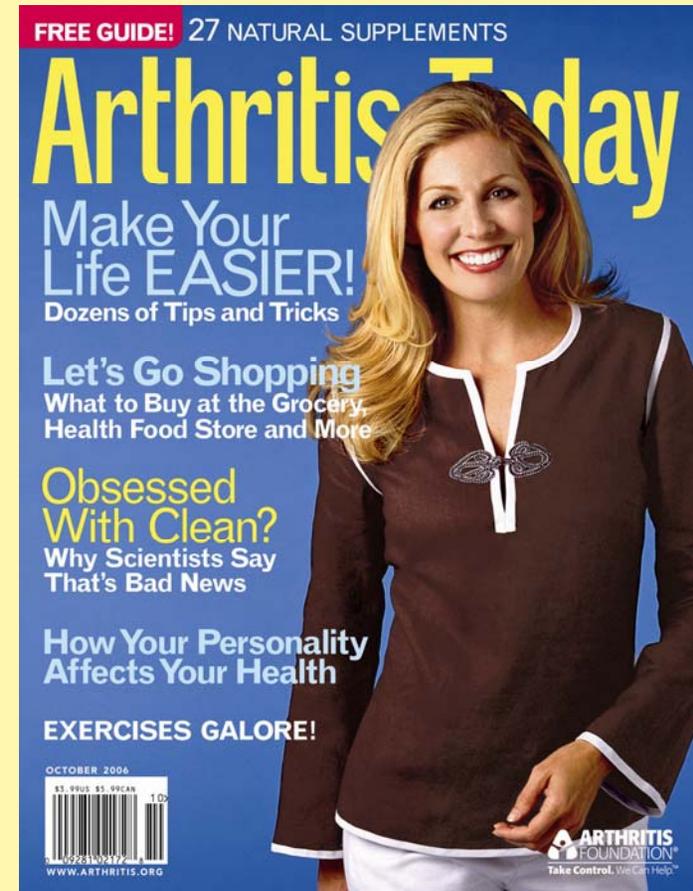
- 1) Can a different tool or piece of equipment be used to complete the task?*
- 2) Can steps be omitted or combined? Can I fit in more rest breaks?*
- 3) Is there someone else who can help with the necessary activity?*

***Remember – asking for help isn't a sign of weakness; it's a smart way to do business.***



## Let the Arthritis Foundation Help Now

- The Arthritis Foundation can provide more information and ideas to help you make life and work easier, less painful, and more enjoyable.
- Contact us and begin taking control of arthritis!
  - [www.rockymountainarthritis.org](http://www.rockymountainarthritis.org)
  - (800) 475-6447





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