

Arthritis

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Arthritis is the name for a group of conditions that damage joints causing pain, stiffness and reduced mobility. It affects 34% of Albertans and nearly four million Canadians 15 years and older – almost one in six people. Arthritis isn't just an older person's disease; it can affect children and people in the prime of life. Arthritis can be relatively mild or very severe, but common symptoms include:

- Joint swelling
- Joint stiffness or reduced movement
- Muscle weakness
- Reduced function

Causes of Arthritis

Arthritis is the thinning or destruction of joint cartilage caused by inflammation or excessive wear and tear. There are over 100 different types of arthritis, common forms are:

- Osteoarthritis (usually affects hands and weight-bearing joints like hips, knees, feet, and spine)
- Rheumatoid arthritis (can affect all joints in the body)
- Gout (affects the foot)

There are many possible contributing factors for arthritis including:

- Genetics or inheritance
- Weight
- Previous injury or fracture
- Infection
- Overactive immune system

How physiotherapists help

Physiotherapists are highly skilled at assessing how arthritis affects joint movement, muscle strength and physical function. Research demonstrates that specific exercises targeted at improving joint mobility and increasing muscle strength help manage arthritis and improve function.

Your physiotherapist will:

- Assess the affected area and ask about daily activities to determine the impact on your joints
- Develop a treatment plan to safely improve or restore movement and mobility affected by arthritis
- Help you manage your condition through education and treatment to reduce pain and swelling, strengthen muscles and increase joint mobility without worsening your arthritis symptoms



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