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May 2018

Volume 9

Issue 5

NorthPointe News



ARTHRITIS OF THE FOOT & ANKLE



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ARTHRITIS AWARENESS MONTH MAY

May is recognized each year as National Arthritis Awareness Month. According to the Arthritis Foundation, arthritis is a disease that impacts more than 50 million Americans, making it the number one cause of disability in the country. That means 1 in every 5 adults, 300,000 children and countless families are affected by arthritis. These numbers are only going to keep growing—unless we take a stand

The Arthritis Foundation is leading the way to conquer arthritis and its effects through advocacy efforts at the state level and on Capitol Hill, as well as with cutting-edge scientific research, and tools and resources that help individuals live their best life.

The first steps in conquering arthritis are learning the facts, understanding your condition and knowing that help is available. To find out more about the resources and tools available to help manage the disease, visit the Arthritis Foundation website at:

www.arthritis.org



Pain and stiffness in your feet and ankles as you grow older could be arthritis. If left untreated, this nagging pain can grow worse, eventually becoming so excruciating that you can no longer walk even short distances.

Severe arthritis can restrict your mobility and limit your quality of life, but with proper treatment, you can slow the development of arthritis and lead a more productive life.

What is Arthritis?

Arthritis is a broad term for a number of conditions that destroy the workings of a normal joint. Arthritis may occur in your back, neck, hips, knees, shoulders or hands, but it also occurs in your feet and ankles. Almost half of people in their 60s and 70s have arthritis of the foot and/or ankle that may not cause symptoms.

There are many different types of arthritis. The most common type, osteoarthritis, results from the "wear and tear" damage to joint cartilage (the soft tissue between joint bones) that comes with age. The result is inflammation, redness, swelling and pain in the joint.

Also, a sudden and traumatic injury such as a broken bone, torn ligament or moderate ankle sprain can cause the injured joint to become arthritic in the future. Sometimes a traumatic injury will result in arthritis in the injured joint even though the joint received proper medical care at the time of injury.

Another common type, rheumatoid arthritis, is an inflammatory condition caused by an irritation of the joint lining (the synovium). People with rheumatoid arthritis for at least ten years almost always develop arthritis in some part of the foot or ankle.

Other types of inflammatory arthritis include gout, lupus, ankylosing spondylitis and psoriatic arthritis.

Treatment

Proper treatment of foot and ankle arthritis addresses both pain and joint deformity. Pain develops when the joint is injured. Injury to the joint may result from swelling caused by

inflammatory arthritis or from the loss of joint surface (cartilage), often caused by trauma. If left untreated, the foot and ankle may eventually become deformed.

If your NorthPointe Foot & Ankle doctor suspects you have arthritis of the foot and ankle, he will ask you to have a complete medical history and physical examination. X-rays and laboratory tests often can confirm the type and extent of the arthritis. Other tests such as a bone scan, computed tomography (CT) scan or magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) may be used to evaluate your condition.



Once your doctor confirms you have arthritis, he will recommend a treatment regimen which may include medications by mouth (anti-inflammatories), injections (steroids), physical therapy, weight loss, or orthotics such as pads in your shoes or custom-made braces.

Depending on your case, surgery may be necessary. This may mean cleaning the arthritic joint, eliminating the painful motion of the joint, replacing the joint with an artificial joint, or a combination of all these.

If you are experiencing symptoms of arthritis, visit your NorthPointe podiatrist today. There is no need to live with unnecessary discomfort or pain.

Receive our monthly newsletter.
Send your email address to:
Doctors@NorthPointeFoot.com

Gout

Gout is a type of inflammatory arthritis that results from the build-up of uric acid in the tissues or a joint. It most often affects the joint of the big toe.

Gout attacks are caused by deposits of crystallized uric acid in the joint. Uric acid is present in the blood and eliminated in the urine, but in people who have gout, uric acid accumulates and crystallizes in the joints. Uric acid is the result of the breakdown of purines, chemicals that are found naturally in our bodies and in food. Some people develop gout because their kidneys have difficulty eliminating normal amounts of uric acid, while others produce too much uric acid.

7 Foods that Prevent Gout



Gout occurs most commonly in the big toe because uric acid is sensitive to temperature changes. At cooler temperatures, uric acid turns into crystals. Since the toe is the part of the body that is farthest from the heart, it's also the coolest part of the body and, thus, the most likely target of gout. However, gout can affect any joint in the body.

The tendency to accumulate uric acid is often inherited. Other factors that put a person at risk for developing gout include: high blood pressure, diabetes, obesity, surgery, chemotherapy, stress, and certain medications and vitamins. For example, the body's ability to remove uric acid can be negatively affected by taking aspirin, some diuretic medications ("water pills"), and the vitamin niacin (also called nicotinic acid). While gout is more common in men aged 40 to 60 years, it can occur in younger men as well as in women.

Consuming foods and beverages that contain high levels of purines can trigger an attack of gout. Some foods contain more purines than others and have been associated with an increase of uric acid, which leads to gout. Chances of getting a gout attack may be reduced by limiting or avoiding shellfish, organ meats (kidney, liver, etc.), red wine, beer, and red meat.

Avoid Foot Fungus this Summer

As many as 1 in 10 people will suffer from foot fungus over the course of a lifetime. It can be an embarrassing and uncomfortable condition, with symptoms ranging from yellow, thickened toenails to patches of itchy, burning athlete's foot and callus-like plantar warts.

Understanding the underlying causes of foot infections is imperative to preventing them. There are several ways you can avoid a foot fungus infection this summer:

- Wash with non-alkaline, soap-less detergent.
- Thoroughly dry your feet with a towel once a day.
- Wear breathable socks and shoes.
- Regularly use a dry, mild foot powder.
- If you experience a lot of wetness between the toes, try using lamb's wool padding to cushion the toes.
- Midway through the day, change from sweaty socks and shoes into a fresh, dry set.
- Avoid harsh chemical sprays and antiseptic solutions, which irritate the skin and actually cause infection.



Exercise and Arthritis

Exercise is crucial for people with arthritis. It increases strength and flexibility, reduces joint pain, and helps combat fatigue. When arthritis threatens to immobilize you, exercise keeps you moving. Follow this advice for walking safely.

Before you get walking, a series of loosening-up exercises will help alleviate any muscle stiffness or pulled muscles that may be ahead of you. Take five deep breaths for each slow stretch and hold the stretched muscle firm without bouncing. After every walk, stretch again to improve circulation and decrease buildup of lactic acid, the chemical byproduct that causes muscles to ache.

Setting appropriate goals is vital to a successful walking program. First, make walking a habit. Start slowly, with five or ten-minute walks three to five times a week. As walks get longer, their frequency can be adjusted.

Don't overdo it. Starting too quickly and getting injured or uncomfortably sore may decrease your enthusiasm before walking has had a chance to work its magic on your mind and body.

Start your walks slowly, and gradually work up to a brisk speed that will cover a mile in 15 minutes (that's four miles per hour). Measure a one-mile stretch, record your time, and see how you improve as the weeks go by.

To get significant benefits from walking, you must eventually be able to walk 20 minutes at a brisk pace without stopping. Walks shouldn't last more than an hour.

A starting regimen should involve walking at least three times per week, but never exceeding five times a week. Walking every day denies the body the rest time it needs to repair minor injuries and could lead to more serious ones.



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