



## **ARTHRITIS**

What is it? Is it curable? What are the symptoms? Are they recognizable?

What types of arthritis are there?

There are two main types, **osteo and rheumatoid**.

### **What is Rheumatoid Arthritis?**

Rheumatoid arthritis (RA) is an autoimmune disease, in many ways similar to lupus, that causes pain and swelling of the joints. The normal role of your body's immune system is to fight off infections to keep you healthy. In an autoimmune disease, your immune system starts attacking your own healthy tissues.

In RA, the immune system targets the lining of the joints, causing inflammation and joint damage. RA usually affects smaller joints, such as the joints in the hands and feet. However larger joints such as the hips and knees can also be affected.

**Who is at risk?** Despite widely held views, developing rheumatoid arthritis is not a normal part of ageing. It's a condition seen in people of all ages, including children and young people, and people from all backgrounds and lifestyles. The causes of RA are not fully understood, although studies have indicated that smoking and family history of RA are risk factors. *Prof Eric Morand*

## What is Osteo-arthritis?

Sometimes called degenerative joint disease or degenerative arthritis, osteoarthritis (OA) is the most common chronic condition of the joints, affecting approximately up to 5 million Australians. OA can affect any joint, but it occurs most often in knees, hips, lower back and neck, small joints of the fingers and the bases of the thumb and big toe.

In normal joints, a firm, rubbery material called cartilage covers the end of each bone. Cartilage provides a smooth, gliding surface for joint motion and acts as a cushion between the bones. In OA, the cartilage breaks down, causing pain, swelling and problems moving the joint. As OA worsens over time, bones may break down and develop growths called spurs. Bits of bone or cartilage may chip off and float around in the joint. In the body, an inflammatory process occurs and cytokines (proteins) and enzymes develop that further damage the cartilage. In the final stages of OA, the cartilage wears away and bone rubs against bone leading to joint damage and more pain.

## Who is Affected?

Although OA occurs in people of all ages, osteoarthritis is most common in people older than 65. Common risk factors include increasing age, obesity, previous joint injury, overuse of the joint, weak thigh muscles, and genes.

- One in two adults will develop symptoms of knee OA during their lives.
  - One in four adults will development symptoms of hip OA by age 85.
  - One in 12 people 60 years or older have hand OA.
- <https://www.arthritis.org> (US)

Osteo is what is described above with degeneration of the joint. There is no cure for this, but treatment can help. Tablets, creams etc. and replacement.

- How can you stop the arthritis from starting?

The easiest way is to have healthy eating and regular exercise, though this is good health there are no guarantees.

Currently there is no known reason why arthritis happens and what causes it.

Monash University (Clayton) under Professor Eric Morand are researching into this together with funding from the Lions Rheumatism and Arthritis Medical Research Foundation Australia.

As an aside with figures, one in eight **Australian women** will be **diagnosed with breast cancer** before the age of 85.

It was estimated that in 2018, 18,087 **Australian women** will be **diagnosed with breast cancer** or approximately 50 each day, or totally up to about 1.5 million.

And again in 2019, it is estimated that 19,508 new cases of **prostate cancer** will be diagnosed in **Australia**.

In 2019, it is estimated that the risk of a **male** being **diagnosed with prostate cancer** by his 85th birthday will be 1 in 6. In 2015, or again totalling up to about 2 million.

With Breast Cancer and Prostate Cancer both can be fatal and that is why they are better known than what arthritis does and how it has effects on peoples ability to do sometimes even menial tasks.

**Recent surveys (National Statistics and also University of Queensland) report that between 1 in 5 or 6 people have a form of Arthritis, that equals 4 to 5 million Australians,**

**How many here know someone who is not a family member who has arthritis? Hands up and keep them up if you are able**

**How many have relative, not immediate family that you know have arthritis? Hands up**

**And how many have relative, wife, husband, father mother, brother sister, son daughter that have arthritis?**

The need for finding a reason why it happens is paramount.

The LR&AMRFAustralia has this goal in mind and with help from Lions and the community can make awareness known and also raise the funds to help the research finding what causes Arthritis and thus find a cure.