

KNOW THE ABC OF ARTHRITIS

Down the inflammatory condition affecting In the backdrop of World Arthritis Day, we break joint and bone health, its early signs, prevention and treatment options

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Reduced mobility, joint pain, swelling, trouble sleeping and fatigue — arthritis impacts everyday life in numerous ways. To raise awareness about the condition,



World Arthritis Day is observed every year on October 12. The theme for this year, 'It's in your hands, take action', is a shout-out to take precautionary measures and make lifestyle changes in order to prevent rheumatic and musculoskeletal diseases (RMDs), including arthritis. Dr Ramneek Mahajan, senior director and head of Joint Replacement Unit, Max Smart Super Speciality Hospital, explains, "Arthritis is associated with joint inflammation. It manifests as joint pain, swelling, stiffness, and in rare cases, deformity of the joints. It can impact a single joint or multiple, making it harder to go about one's routine activities."

TYPES OF ARTHRITIS Depending on the damage caused to the joints, the most common types of arthritis include osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, infective arthritis and gout. "Osteoarthritis causes the cartilage to break down. Cartilage is the hard, slippery tissue that covers the ends of the bones, where the joint is formed. In rheumatoid arthritis, the immune system attacks the joints. Infective arthritis, as the name suggests, causes infections in the joints, and gout is caused when there is too much uric acid in the blood," says Dr Kaushal Kant Mishra, director, Orthopaedics and Joint Replacement, Fortis

AGE GROUPS AT RISK

All age groups are susceptible to arthritis. While osteoarthritis is more common among the elderly, infective arthritis is commonly diagnosed in children. Rheumatoid arthritis majorly affects middle-aged people. "Osteoarthritis is more common in women as compared to men, especially after the age of 45," says Dr Mahajan

CAUSES AND SYMPTOMS Underlying diseases and infections such as lupus and psoriasis, as well as problems with the immune system, can cause arthritis. Dr Mishra says, "Other risk factors include family history, age, gender, previous joint injury, damaged or deformed joints and excess body weight."

Recent studies have suggested that cases of arthritis have increased after the pandemic — possibly due to decreased physical activity. Inflammation has also been observed as a common component of post-Covid-19 syndrome.

Early signs of arthritis include swelling, stiffness, redness, crackling sounds in joints or knees, hip pain and a decreased range of motion. Its impact on one's daily routine can lead to mental health issues. "Any disease that cripples you and reduces your activity level has an adverse effect on mental health," says Dr Mishra.

Furthermore, if treatment is delayed, arthritis can make patients homebound. "This isolation can also lead to anxiety and depression," adds Dr Mahajan.

PRECAUTIONS, TREATMENT Regular knee exercises, keeping

sugar levels in check, maintaining a healthy weight and eating nutritious food are some precautionary measures.

Treatment varies according to the type of arthritis. "Depending on the symptoms and disability status, painkillers may be prescribed. If the issue is more pressing, then intra-articular injections and viscosupplements can be offered. If all conservative measures fail, then surgical treatment is the option. Total joint replacement is the most successful and commonly offered surgery for arthritis," says Dr Mahajan.