

# Arthritis hinders physical activity for adults with heart disease

February 26 2009

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Arthritis affects more than half of adults with heart disease and appears to be a substantial barrier to utilizing physical activity to help manage their condition, according to a new *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR)* study released today by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). According to the Arthritis Foundation, the study underscores the importance of physical activity in effective management for adults with both arthritis and heart disease.

The study is one of the first of its kind to look at the relationship between arthritis and heart disease, and the probable effect of arthritis on physical activity among those with heart disease. The study found that arthritis affected 57 percent of adults with heart disease. Further, people with both diseases were more likely to be physically inactive (29 percent), in contrast to those with heart disease alone (21percent). Adults with heart disease who are sedentary due to arthritis pain are not benefiting from physical activity that has been shown to help manage both diseases.

"People with arthritis often fear physical activity will worsen their pain - and that's a major myth," said Patience White, MD, MA, chief public health officer for the Arthritis Foundation. "However, just 30 minutes of daily physical activity has been shown to reduce arthritis pain and disability and help manage heart disease by lowering blood pressure and cholesterol."

Arthritis is not only a common comorbidity for adults with heart disease.

A recent study released by the CDC in May 2008 found that more than half of adults with diagnosed diabetes also had arthritis, and those affected by both had higher levels of physical inactivity that hindered the successful management of both diseases.

"Engaging in regular physical activity can help reduce arthritis pain and improve joint function, which in turn can help people get more active and better manage co-existing conditions like heart disease and diabetes," said Chad Helmick, MD, a CDC medical epidemiologist and coauthor on the study.

## **Taking Action**

As the nation's most common cause of disability, arthritis affects one in every five Americans.

Arthritis currently costs the U.S. economy more than \$128 billion annually and limits activity for 19 million Americans. With the aging of the baby boomer population, the prevalence of arthritis is expected to rise significantly from 46 million Americans now to 67 million Americans by 2030.

The Arthritis Foundation is working to help address this ever-growing problem through the proposal of legislation introduced this week. The Arthritis Prevention, Control and Cure Act proposes to strengthen arthritis public health initiatives, which would ensure that more people are diagnosed early to avoid pain and permanent disability.

"People are unaware of the seriousness of arthritis and its impact on other diseases," said White. "We want them to know that the Arthritis Foundation offers several safe and effective joint-friendly programs that may help them be more physically active and thereby help manage conditions, such as heart disease and diabetes."

Visit [www.arthritis.org/heart-disease-connection.php](http://www.arthritis.org/heart-disease-connection.php) for more tips on managing arthritis and heart disease.

Source: Arthritis Foundation

Citation: Arthritis hinders physical activity for adults with heart disease (2009, February 26)  
retrieved 6 May 2024 from  
<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2009-02-arthritis-hinders-physical-adults-heart.html>

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