

Column Name- The Heartland Minute

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*“Men’s Health Tip: Managing Arthritis”*

Middle-aged men often have a few things in common. Bad Dad jokes, a need for reading glasses, and increasing pain in their joints. While the jokes are a rite of passage and an optometrist can make recommendations for glasses, chronic joint pain may be a sign of arthritis and a need for an evaluation by a physician.

Men with arthritis may find that one or more of their joints are swollen, stiff, hard to move and painful. Recent studies show that about 19% of men in the U.S. have a doctor-diagnosed arthritis condition, but that number is actually suspected to be much higher because of the undiagnosed cases. Another thing middle-aged men have in common – “It’ll pass, I don’t need a doctor, and don’t have time, even if I wanted to go.”

While there are more than 150 types of arthritis, four of the most common that men experience are osteoarthritis, gout, fibromyalgia and rheumatoid arthritis. Respective symptoms to these conditions are as follows:

Osteoarthritis – Also known as degenerative joint disease, it most frequently appears in the hands, hip and knees, and is caused by extensive wear and tear on the joints.

Gout – This is a painful inflammatory arthritis that typically impacts one joint at a time, often the big toe joint.

Fibromyalgia – This condition causes chronic body pain, sleep and fatigue problems, which can lead to mental distress.

Rheumatoid arthritis – This is both an autoimmune and inflammatory disease in which the immune system attacks healthy cells by mistake, causing inflammation. Once the lining of the joint becomes inflamed, it can lead to tissue damage that is long lasting. It can also impact other tissues in the body and cause organ issues.

If you are experiencing any of these symptoms, you should consider being evaluated by your physician. Depending on which type of arthritis is suspected, the process for diagnosis and treatment will differ. Learning strategies to better manage your arthritis can help you feel more in control of your health, manage pain and other symptoms, reduce stress, improve your mood and allow you to carry out daily activities.

Information comes from K-State Research and Extension Family and Consumer Science Agent, Holly Miner.