To: Senior Newspaper  
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RE: Arthritis  
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Understanding and Reducing Arthritis Symptoms

As we age, many people start to feel pain and stiffness in their bodies. Sometimes the hands, knees or shoulders get sore and are hard to move and may become swollen. People with these problems may have arthritis. Arthritis may be caused by inflammation of the tissue lining the joints. Some signs of inflammation include: redness, heat, pain, and swelling. Joints are places where two bones meet; such as your elbow or knee. Over time, in some types of arthritis but not in all, the joints involved can become severely damaged.

There are several types of arthritis. The two most common ones are osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis. Osteoarthritis is the most common form of arthritis and usually comes with age, most often affecting the fingers, knees, and hips. Sometimes osteoarthritis follows an injury to a joint. For example, a young person might hurt his knee badly playing soccer. Or someone might fall or be injured in a car accident. Then, years after the individual's knee has apparently healed, he might get arthritis in his knee joint.

Rheumatoid arthritis happens when the body's own defense system doesn't work properly. It affects joints and bones (often of the hands and feet), and may also affect internal organs and systems. You may feel sick or tired, and possibly run a fever.
Another common type of arthritis, gout, is caused by crystals that build up in the joints. It usually affects the big toe, but many other joints may be affected.

Arthritis is seen with many other conditions including lupus, in which the body's defense system can harm the joints, heart, skin, kidneys, and other organs, or an infection that gets into a joint and destroys the cushion between the bones.

When a person thinks that they may have arthritis, they can go to their primary care provider for testing and guidance for reducing symptoms. The earlier an accurate diagnosis is made and treatment started the less joint damage and less pain you will have. You might still have pain after using your medicine. Some other remedies to help relieve symptoms include: taking a warm shower, doing some gentle stretching exercises, using an ice pack on the sore area and resting the sore joint.

Arthritis can damage your joints, internal organs, and skin. There are things you can do to keep the damage from getting worse and make you feel better including:

- **Control your weight.** Being overweight can cause your knees and hips to hurt.
- **Exercise.** Moving all of your joints will help, as in walking every day. The doctor or nurse can show you how to move more easily.
- **Take medicine correctly.** This can help reduce pain and stiffness in your joints.
- **Visit your doctor regularly.**

If you still hurt after using your medicine correctly and doing one or more of these things, call your doctor. Another kind of medicine might work better for you. Some people can also benefit from surgery, such as joint replacement. Arthritis symptoms may worsen with age.

For more information about arthritis, visit [www.arthritis.org](http://www.arthritis.org).
This article has been brought to you by the Central Michigan District Health Department serving the residents of Arenac, Clare, Gladwin, Isabella, Osceola, and Roscommon counties.

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