



# Arthritis

How **physiotherapy** can help



**Over 4.6 million Canadian adults** (one in six Canadians aged 15 years and older) report having arthritis. By 2036, this number is expected to grow to an estimated 7.5 million Canadian adults (one in five).

The impact of arthritis on the Canadian economy in health-care costs and lost productivity is estimated to be **\$33 billion every year**. By 2031, this number is expected to more than double, to **over \$67 billion**.

Among all causes of disability in Canada, arthritis ranks first among women and third among men.



## What is arthritis?

- The word *arthritis* means inflammation of the joint.
- Inflammation is a medical term describing pain, stiffness, redness and swelling.
- Can affect any of the joints in the body, often occurring in the hip, knee, spine or other weight-bearing joints, but can also affect the fingers and other non-weight-bearing joints.
- Symptoms include joint pain, swelling, stiffness and fatigue. Untreated inflammation can eventually lead to joint damage, destruction and disability. Some forms of arthritis can also affect the body's internal organs.



# How can I manage my arthritis?

- Physiotherapy has an excellent long-standing history of effectively treating the symptoms of arthritis.
- Therapeutic exercise is an effective means to achieve pain relief, improve strength, reduce swollen joints and improve function.
- A Canadian study of patients with rheumatoid arthritis showed that those who followed a home-based physiotherapy program improved with the treatment and were able to maintain the results one year later.
- Studies have shown that therapeutic exercise, whether prescribed for specific joint problems or a general exercise program, results in reduced pain, improvement in physical activity, aerobic capacity and energy levels.

If you are experiencing pain, joint stiffness and decreased mobility due to arthritis,  
**physiotherapy can help.**

Physiotherapists (PT) have advanced training from a university and are registered to practice by their provincial/ territorial regulatory college. PTs who specialize in arthritis are trained to do a full assessment of your physical abilities, based on a detailed examination of all your joints' function. They note how much pain and discomfort you have in affected joints, as well as how much strength, flexibility and range of motion you have in both healthy and arthritic joints.

A PT can develop an individualized program designed to help you increase your strength, flexibility, range of motion, and general mobility through a wide variety of therapeutic treatments and strategies. These include exercise prescription, physical interventions and relaxation, in addition to advising you on other techniques for reducing pain and increasing your overall quality of life. PTs can also refer you to other health professionals and community services for further measures that will help you adapt to your changing circumstances.