

Workbook 2

Awareness of Dementia, Arthritis and Parkinson's Disease

SENSORY LOSS

ARTHRITIS

OBSERVATIONS AND REPORTING

MONITORING

STROKE AWARENESS

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

Level 2

Certificate in Common Health Conditions

Section 2: Arthritis awareness

In this section you will gain an understanding of what arthritis is and the treatment options and support services available. You will also look at the impact arthritis can have on an individual and how the condition can be managed.

What is arthritis

Please read the following, as it will help you to answer question 12.

Arthritis is inflammation of the joint and can cause stiffness, swelling and pain in the joints causing individuals difficulty in mobility and everyday tasks.

Common types of arthritis and how they affect the joints

Please read the following, as it will help you to answer questions 13, 14 and 15.

The two most common types of arthritis are Osteoarthritis and Rheumatoid Arthritis.

Osteoarthritis

Osteoarthritis is the most common form and often develops in people aged over 50. It affects the cartilage in the joint, which is a smooth layer between the bones allowing the joint to move freely. In osteoarthritis the cartilage erodes. Initially this causes the growth of bony lumps called osteophytes. As it erodes further, the bones start to rub together. This leads to pain, stiffness and swelling in the joints.

Osteoarthritis most often affects the small joints in the hands, base of the big toe, the spine, knees and hips.

The main signs and symptoms of osteoarthritis are:

- pain in the joints
- stiffness in the joints which usually wears off after about half an hour
- increased pain and stiffness when joints have not been moved for a while
- appearance of joint is swollen and lumpy
- grating and cracking sound in the joints
- loss of muscle

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Knee joints may be painful when going upstairs, may grate and can give way or be difficult to straighten. Hip joints will be painful and difficult to move. If the spine is affected, it will usually be the neck or lower back. The neck will cause stiffness and may cause pain in the neck and shoulders. The lower back will cause stiffness and pain, which may also be felt in the hips and legs. In the hands, the joints may become swollen, painful and bumpy and cysts may develop on the fingers. The fingers may also start to bend and a lump can develop at the base of the thumb.

Rheumatoid arthritis

Rheumatoid arthritis is an inflammatory condition of the joints that can occur at any age. It happens where the body's immune system attacks the joints and the tissue around them becomes swollen. It is not known why this happens. The inflammation may also affect the tendons and ligaments around the joint and can damage the bone. Rheumatoid arthritis often affects several joints at the same time. Quite often, the smaller joints in the fingers and toes are affected first.

The symptoms include:

- swelling and stiffness in the joints often starting in fingers and toes though shoulders and knees can also be affected early on
- throbbing, aching pain often worse in the mornings and whilst resting
- stiffness that lasts more than 30 minutes after starting to move about
- warmth and redness in the joint
- flare-ups when the symptoms become more intense and severe
- a general feeling of fatigue and sometimes depression

The images below show how the different types of arthritis might affect a knee joint.



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Causes of arthritis

Please read the following, as it will help you to answer question 16.

The exact causes of osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis are not known. They appear to be caused by a number of factors that occur together and these include:

- Genetics – if you have a family member with the condition, you may be more likely to develop it.
- Age – osteoarthritis tends to start at age 50 and rheumatoid arthritis is most often diagnosed aged forty to fifty.
- Gender – rheumatoid arthritis is three times more likely in women than in men.
- Injury to joints can trigger osteoarthritis.
- Infection can trigger rheumatoid arthritis.
- Lifestyle factors can increase the risk – look at the next heading for more about these.



Knowledge Activity 5: What do we mean by lifestyle factors? List the possible lifestyle choices that could be a factor for arthritis.



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Risk factors

Please read the following, as it will help you to answer question 17.

While not much is known about how arthritis occurs, there do appear to be links to certain lifestyle factors:

- Some evidence shows that smokers are more likely to develop rheumatoid arthritis.
- People who drink more than the recommended limit are also at higher risk of rheumatoid arthritis.
- Being overweight can put more pressure on the joints – especially the knees and hips. This is a risk factor for osteoarthritis.
- Using an injured joint when it hasn't had time to heal will increase the chance of osteoarthritis in later life.

Knowledge Activity 6: State the recommended daily alcohol limits for women and men and explain what this means in terms of normal pub measures.



Diagnosis

Please read the following, as it will help you to answer question 18.

Osteoarthritis is usually diagnosed by first checking a list of symptoms and carrying out a physical examination. For problems with the knees and hands this is usually sufficient, though x-rays may be taken of knees to confirm the diagnosis. For osteoarthritis in the spine, x-rays and MRI scans may be used and blood tests may be carried out to exclude other illnesses. In the hip, osteoarthritis can only be diagnosed by x-rays and blood tests.

Rheumatoid arthritis is diagnosed through carrying out blood tests, a physical examination and taking a detailed medical history.