

## Cascade Quarterly News

# ARTHRITIS

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### all about arthritis

Arthritis can be very mild, causing a little stiffness as you age, or it can be extremely painful and debilitating. Fortunately, there are things you can do to prevent and manage this condition.

Arthritis is not actually a disease. Arthritis is a term used to describe joint inflammation ("arthro" = joint; "itis" = inflammation). When inflammation is present, the joint is usually painful. However, not all joint pain is arthritis. Problems like trigger points, sprains, or

tendinitis can cause pain, but the joint itself remains healthy.

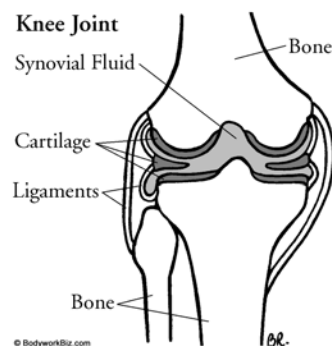
To help you understand arthritis, it's useful to know a little bit about joints. Joints are like hinges between bones. The surfaces where the bones connect are covered with cartilage; you would recognize this as gristle on a chicken leg. Cartilage is a smooth material that acts as a shock absorber and allows the bones to glide smoothly over one

another. Ligaments (fibrous structures that attach one bone to another bone) surround the joint to form a sleeve that encapsulates the joint. Inside that sleeve is a slippery fluid called synovial fluid. This fluid lubricates the cartilage much like oil lubricates the parts of an engine.

There are virtually dozens of problems or pathologies that are considered arthritis. Two of the most common are osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis

*Almost everyone over 60 years of age will have enough arthritis present to be detected in x-rays.*

### the Knee joint



## what kind is it?

*“Massage therapy treatment goals for arthritis include decreasing muscle tightness to help improve joint mobility. This will help to alleviate pain.*

*As well, RMTs teach their clients about correct posture for daily activities and important exercises for their individual circumstances.”*

### Osteoarthritis

Doctors will often refer to this type of arthritis as degenerative joint disease, or if it affects the back, degenerative disc disease. It sounds scary, but it's the most common and least serious type of arthritis. Osteoarthritis is simply wear and tear of the cartilage on the ends of the bones. One research study

found that 37% of all adults have osteoarthritis in their hands or feet. Everyone over sixty-five years of age has it to some degree. However, because the cartilage is not sensitive to pain, you most often do not know you have it.

Stiffness is a key feature of osteoarthritis. Typically, your joints feel stiff in the morning and will loosen up

after you move around for awhile. Sometimes the joints will make crackling or crunching sounds with movement. In the early stages, you will only feel pain after excessive activity. The pain is usually an aching sensation within the joint. You will seldom see swelling because inflammation in the joint tends to be minimal.

### Rheumatoid arthritis

Rheumatoid arthritis is not nearly as common as osteoarthritis. It occurs in only about 1% of adults.

This type of arthritis is called systemic arthritis because it can affect many of your body systems. For example, it can affect your heart, lungs, nerves and skin. Whereas osteoarthritis

usually develops as you get older, rheumatoid arthritis can occur at any age.

Usually the symptoms appear over a period of weeks or months and are accompanied by fatigue, fever, and diffuse pain. Subsequently, specific joints become inflamed and

are painful, tender, swollen and red. Many joints become involved and both sides of your body are affected equally. There are periods when it goes into remission. It's progressive however and overtime the involved joints often become somewhat deformed.

## Other arthritic conditions

There are many different types of arthritis. The inflammatory arthritides are systemic diseases with distinguishable symptoms affecting

connective tissue and joints. Some examples are lupus, ankylosing spondylitis, psoriatic arthritis, Reiter's syndrome, and gout.

Treatment and management of these conditions varies; a multidisciplinary approach often works well to decrease symptoms and frequency of flare ups.

## *HELP is available*

Treatment of rheumatoid arthritis and other types of systemic inflammatory arthritis most often involves the use of medications in conjunction with massage, joint mobilization and exercise. By following this type of regimen, a person can usually minimize their pain and discomfort significantly.

If Osteoarthritis starts to give you problems, it can

usually be managed very well without medication. It is vitally important, however, that you take proactive measures to prevent wear and tear on your joints. You must manage your tension and maintain good posture to prevent excessive or uneven pressure on your joints. You can do this by practicing relaxation exercises, stretching and by having regular

massage. If you want to learn how to improve your posture ask your massage therapist to do a postural assessment and to suggest some simple exercises to help correct imbalances. Many therapists are also trained in techniques that will allow them to manually stretch out shortened muscles that are pulling your body out of alignment.

## Regular exercise is the key

Do you have to stop exercising because your cartilage is wearing thin? Far from it. You need to move your joints to get nutrients to your cartilage so it can heal. Inactivity can actually cause your cartilage to deteriorate faster. If you have a sedentary job, make sure that you take frequent breaks. As well, engage in some low impact activities like walking, swimming, biking or any activity that you enjoy doing on a regular basis. If you need help starting a program ask your therapist for

assistance.

In the case of osteoarthritis, you should consider surgery only if conservative treatment has not been successful, and pain and limitation in movement interferes with your day-to-day activities in a significant way.

With arthritic conditions, some joints will lose their mobility, while other joints will tend to become hypermobile. Your muscles have to work harder to both compensate for lost

movement and to stabilize loose joints. Remember that cartilage doesn't feel pain. The pain associated with arthritis usually comes from overworked muscles or sometimes from the capsule that surrounds the joint. For this reason, massage therapy can be invaluable in managing your symptoms: general massage to reduce muscle spasm, trigger point therapy to reduce referred pain, and when necessary, joint mobilization to stretch tightened joints and restore your mobility.

*"Inactivity can actually cause your cartilage to degenerate faster."*

If you have specific health concerns consult your medical doctor.

The information in this newsletter is educational only and is not intended to replace the advice of your personal health care providers.

## About Cascade Massage Therapy



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### My Approach

***I bring over 12 years of bodywork experience and education to the massage table!*** I offer you diverse and comprehensive massage therapy sessions. Your treatment goals are foremost and your needs will be heard and addressed. I utilize both traditional and alternative treatment techniques, and recommend self care tips and exercise options that evolve with your individual healing process.

***My intention is to be a facilitator in the cascade of your healing process and health maintenance.***

I believe that within the human body is the desire and ability to be well, and through bodywork, I serve to act as a catalyst for this process.

***This is your time*** - I encourage you to enjoy the stillness of your session, and sense the changes occurring in your body while we work - you don't need to be entertaining or start a conversation; that being said, please recognize that I do not read minds. I expect my clients to participate in his or her experience and give feedback when there is any discomfort during the treatment.



***Cascade Massage Therapy is focused on education and prevention.*** It is important that you know what you can do to help prevent stress, tension, and pain when you are not with me. I allow for time at the end of our session to converse, suggest self care tips and exercises that would be beneficial for you, and answer any questions that you may have.

I believe that prolonged stress, whether environmental, physical or emotional is a primary factor in dis-ease and a true obstacle to healing. Therefore, ***I welcome you to a peace-filled and relaxing environment where you can experience relief from pain and tension.***

## Contact Me

To learn more about my work, I invite you to visit my website at :  
[www.cascademassagetherapy.com](http://www.cascademassagetherapy.com)

You are welcome to call me at **250-550-4727** for a **free 10 minute phone consultation.**

We can discuss your goals and I will answer any questions you may have about how Cascade Massage Therapy can benefit you.