

**Affecting 4.5 million, or 1 in 6, Canadians, Arthritis is a common and important disease among people of all ages, physical conditions, or ethnic backgrounds. The term arthritis broken down simply means joint inflammation, and the term itself is used to describe more than 100 related conditions.**

Symptoms of arthritis vary, but it is very commonly experienced with joint pain and swelling that often impacts daily activities. Generally, there are two types of arthritis: rheumatoid arthritis and related diseases, which are immune-mediated, and osteoarthritis, which is a degenerative joint disease. More than 10% of Canadian adults are affected by some degree of osteoarthritis, and approximately 3/5 people with arthritis are of working age (under 65). A recent report estimates that arthritis may cost the Canadian economy more than \$33 billion annually.

To top it all off, there is no cure for arthritis; however, the great majority of people with it can lead active lives and avoid permanent joint damage if the disease is diagnosed early and an appropriate treatment plan is initiated. Self-management is a vital part of the management of arthritis, as it is with any disease, and can include healthy eating, physical activity, rest, and joint-protection techniques. Maintaining a healthy body weight through a combination of exercise and healthy-eating is a particularly important part of managing arthritis because less weight means less pressure on the joints.