

Lesson 3: Introduction to Arthritis



LESSON OVERVIEW

Objectives:

By the end of the lesson, the Lay Health Worker will be able to:

1. Describe what arthritis is in general terms.
2. Identify common myths and beliefs about arthritis that may exist in the community.
3. Identify the anatomy of the joint and describe the function of the joints.
4. Name the two most common types of arthritis.

Estimated time:

45 minutes

Materials:

- LCD Projector
- PPT Presentation (Found on CD)
- Easel
- Easel paper/newsprint paper
- Markers
- Tape

Lesson Outline:

- Topic 1: Arthritis: What Is It?
- Topic 2: Myths and Facts about Arthritis
- Topic 3: Joint Anatomy
- Topic 4: Common Types of Arthritis



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LESSON 3: Introduction to Arthritis

Today, you will learn that arthritis is a problem in the farmworker community. The goal of this lesson is to introduce you to the topic of arthritis and to learn the basic information, beginning with understanding the body parts most affected by arthritis and looking at the two most common types of arthritis. Let's review the objectives for this lesson before we begin.

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Topic 1: Arthritis: What Is It?

Many of you may have heard about arthritis. But, did you know that arthritis refers to more than 100 different diseases? Each of these diseases has different causes, symptoms, and treatments. But, what exactly is arthritis?

Since there are so many kinds of arthritis, we can answer the question by saying that arthritis happens when there is a problem in the joint. Still, this does not tell us much information about the disease. You may be thinking:

- Since there are 100 different types of arthritis, what are the most common types of arthritis that people have?
- If arthritis happens when something is wrong with my joint, shouldn't I know what a joint looks like and how it works?
- Out of all these types of arthritis, which ones affect farmworkers the most?

We will answer these questions one at a time, but first, let's talk about what we know about arthritis.



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Topic 2: Myths and Facts about Arthritis

Let's do an activity to see what we have all heard about arthritis. Many of you may have heard things in your community from your friends or from family members. People have many different ideas about what causes arthritis or even how to treat it. Let's share what we have heard.



Display Slides 60 - 67

Activity 1 Quiz True or False?

Purpose: To address the most common myths related to arthritis.

Time: 10-15 minutes

Materials: **Slides 61-62** and **Activity Sheet 1: True or False?**; **Slides 63-67** and **Handout 1: Myths and Facts about Arthritis**

1. Show **slides 61 and 62** and pass out **Activity Sheet 1: True or False?** to the group.
2. Give the participants about 5 minutes to answer the questions.
3. Review the quiz with the group. Read each statement to the group and let them answer.
4. If the answer is not correct, ask the participants to explain why they answered the way they did.
5. Use **Slides 63-67** and **Handout 1: Myths and Facts about Arthritis** to show the group the answers and explanations.



Distribute Handout 1: Myths and Facts about Arthritis

Before we review the quiz, it is important to know that sometimes when information is passed from one person to another, people tend to add new ideas to the information. Over time, it can change so much that it is no longer true and then it can become a myth.

This activity will help us find out if what we know is true and show us how much we still need to learn. Remember, it is our job as Lay Health Workers to give people correct information.

1. **MYTH: Arthritis is an old person's disease.**

FACT: The fact is that arthritis can affect any of us, even children.

2. **MYTHS: Arthritis is caused by cold and/or wet weather or by changes between hot and cold.**

FACT: For years, many people thought that a person can get arthritis when they are in cold, wet weather. Many others think that dry weather can cure arthritis or help people get back their ability to move. Unfortunately, people in all types of climates, warm or cold, are affected by arthritis. Even though warm weather can make people feel better, it **CANNOT** prevent or reverse the effects of arthritis.

3. **MYTHS: Arthritis can happen when we DO NOT eat well.**

FACT: There is no proof that a particular food causes arthritis. But, we do know that a healthy, well-balanced diet and a healthy weight can improve overall health and wellness for everyone, whether you have arthritis or not. Weight control is very important for people with arthritis because the extra weight puts more stress on the joints.

4. **MYTHS: Arthritis can be prevented by NOT eating red meat.**

FACT: There are about 100 types of arthritis and they can be caused by many things. Red meat alone does not cause every type of arthritis. However, there is one type of arthritis condition that can get worse when you eat too much red meat. This type of arthritis is called Gout. Gout is a disease that causes sudden attacks of pain and swelling in some joints. It usually affects one joint at a time – and most of the time, it is the big toe.

5. MYTHS: You can prevent arthritis by NOT eating flour or salt.

FACT: There is no proof that a particular food causes arthritis, except for some people who have specific food allergies that can make their arthritis worse.

6. MYTH: You can get arthritis if you crack your knuckles.

FACT: There is no proof that cracking your knuckles causes arthritis.

7. MYTH: Wearing copper bracelets can cure arthritis.

FACT: There is no scientific proof that wearing copper bracelets can cure arthritis.

8. MYTH: A lotion made with green alcohol and marijuana helps arthritis pain.

FACT: There is no scientific proof that the folk remedies we have learned from family members and friends can cure arthritis.

9. MYTH: Your body shrinks when you have arthritis.

FACT: Your body does not shrink when you have arthritis. Many people confuse Osteoarthritis (OA), a type of arthritis, with Osteoporosis, which is a disease that affects the bones and causes them to become smaller and weaker. In other words, OA and Osteoporosis are **NOT** the same thing.



NOTE TO THE TRAINER

Ask the participants what else they have heard about arthritis from family, friends, and members of their community.

Through this training, you will learn the facts about arthritis and how you can give people in your community correct information about the disease.



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Topic 3: Joint Anatomy

Before we learn more about arthritis, we are going to review the joint anatomy. It is important to know which parts of the body arthritis affects in order to understand the disease better.

Our body is made up of many systems that allow our body to work properly. For example, the respiratory system helps us to breathe, the cardiovascular system is responsible for circulating blood through our body, and the digestive system helps us to process the food we eat.



Ask the following:

- ❖ Can someone tell me which body system you think arthritis affects?

Arthritis affects our musculoskeletal system, specifically the joints. In addition to the joints, the musculoskeletal system also includes the muscles, bones, tendons, ligaments, and nerves. It gives us the ability to move, helps us support our weight and maintain our posture, and protects our internal organs. Now, let's talk about joint anatomy.



Ask the following:

- ❖ Can someone show me where you have a joint on your body?



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NOTE TO THE TRAINER

Point to each part of the joint as you explain the joint anatomy.
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Distribute Handout 2: Joint Anatomy

Joints are where two or more bones meet, like the elbow or knees. Joints are everywhere in our body and we have many in our bodies. There are big ones, like the hips and shoulders, and small ones, like the toes and fingers. You can jump, dance, or run because the joints allow you to move and have flexibility; otherwise we would be as stiff as a broom handle.

The bones in a joint should not touch each other. Between the bones, there is a firm, slippery tissue that covers the ends of the bones, called **cartilage**. The cartilage works as a sponge between the bones. Without this sponge, the two bones will start rubbing each other and damaging the bone and causing pain. Cartilage also acts as a “shock absorber.” For example, when you jump up and down, the cartilage cushions the bones so that you do not feel any pain. If you want to know what cartilage feels like, touch your nose or ears. If you want to imagine what cartilage looks like, think of the white covering at the end of a chicken leg bone.

The **synovium** lines the joint and makes something called **synovial fluid**. It surrounds the joint and lubricates it so that the joint can move smoothly. This fluid works like oil on a hinge.

Ligaments, tendons, and muscles surround the joints. Each of these is a type of tissue that helps the joints bend and move. Ligaments connect the bones to form a joint. Ligaments hold the joints together and help them to be stable. Tendons connect muscles to the bone and muscles relax or contract to make our body move.



NOTE TO THE TRAINER

Ask the participants if they have any questions on joint anatomy and answer them before continuing with the lesson.



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Topic 4: Common Types of Arthritis

At the beginning of this lesson, we learned that arthritis refers to more than 100 different diseases. We also learned that each of these diseases has different causes, symptoms, and treatments. Because there are so many types of arthritis, this training will only focus on two of them. They are: Osteoarthritis and Rheumatoid Arthritis. We are focusing on these two because they are the most common types of arthritis among women and men. We will also give special attention to Osteoarthritis because farmworkers are at a higher risk of developing this disease due to the work they do and because it can be prevented to some extent.



Ask the following:

- ❖ Have any of you heard of Osteoarthritis or Rheumatoid Arthritis?
- ❖ Can someone tell me the difference between Osteoarthritis and Rheumatoid Arthritis?

Many people in our communities use the word “reumas” to describe different types of arthritis, and most of the time we confuse Osteoarthritis with Rheumatoid Arthritis. Osteoarthritis and Rheumatoid Arthritis have many differences, like how they develop and which parts of the body they affect. But, people can have both Osteoarthritis and Rheumatoid Arthritis at the same time.

Many people also confuse Osteoarthritis with Osteoporosis. As we learned earlier, Osteoporosis and Osteoarthritis are different. Osteoporosis is a disease where bones become very fragile and they can break. **Osteoarthritis**, or **OA**, is a disease of the joints that mostly affects cartilage. OA is the most common type of arthritis.

Rheumatoid arthritis, or **RA**, is the second most common form of arthritis. RA is an autoimmune disease. This means that the immune system attacks the healthy tissue that lines the joints. This inflames the joints and causes pain and stiffness. It also makes it harder to move the joints. RA will eventually damage or destroy the joints.

Both Osteoarthritis and Rheumatoid Arthritis are chronic diseases. This means that they are diseases that develop slowly and last a long time.

We are going to learn more about OA and RA in the next two lessons.