

# Preventing Chronic Diseases: Investing Wisely in Health

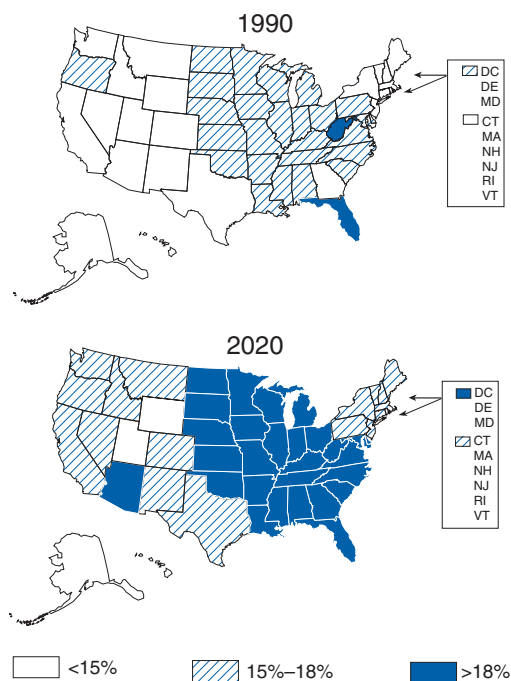
## Preventing Arthritis Pain and Disability

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND  
HUMAN SERVICES

### The Reality

- Nearly 70 million Americans—about one in every three adults—have arthritis or chronic joint symptoms. As the population ages, this number will probably increase dramatically.
- Arthritis is more common among older adults, but it also affects many children and young adults. In fact, 60% of people with arthritis are younger than 65.
- Arthritis is the leading cause of disability among U.S. adults. It limits everyday activities for more than 7 million Americans. By 2020, an estimated 12 million Americans will be limited in daily activities because of arthritis.
- Early and aggressive management of inflammatory arthritis can reduce complications and delay costly procedures like joint replacements.
- Unfortunately, many people with arthritis do not seek health care, probably because they believe nothing can be done to help their arthritis.

### Estimated Arthritis Prevalence, 1990 and Projected to 2020

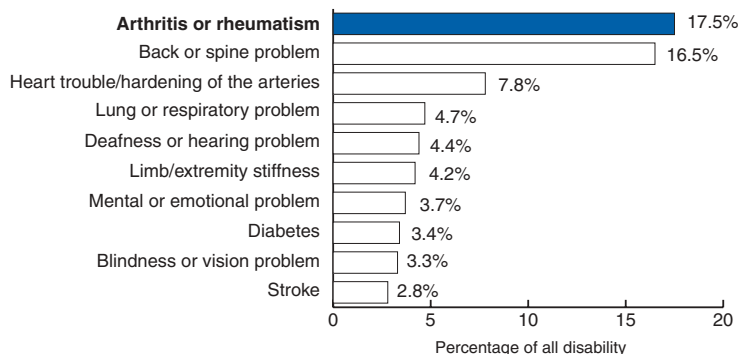


Source: Helmick CG, Lawrence RC, Pollard RA, Lloyd E, Heyse SP. Arthritis and other rheumatic conditions: who is affected now, and who will be affected later? *Arthritis Care and Research* 1995;8:203-11.

### The Cost of Arthritis

- The estimated annual cost of arthritis in this country, including lost productivity, rose from \$65 billion in 1992 to \$82 billion in 1995, an increase of \$17 billion in 3 years. More than \$22 billion is for medical care.
- Arthritis is responsible for 750,000 hospitalizations and 44 million outpatient visits every year.
- As the U.S. population ages, arthritis-related costs are going to soar dramatically.

### Most Common Causes of Disability Among Americans Aged 18 Years or Older, 1999



Source: CDC. Prevalence of disabilities and associated health conditions among adults—United States, 1999. *MMWR* 2001;50:120-5.

### Arthritis Control: A Good Investment

Early diagnosis and appropriate management of arthritis, including self-management activities such as self-help courses, weight control, and physical activity, can help people with arthritis function better, stay productive, and have lower health care costs.

- A recent study estimated that an insurer or health care organization that implements the Arthritis Self-Help Course among just 10,000 people with arthritis can expect a net savings of more than \$2.5 million over 4 years.
- Achieving a healthy weight lowers a person's risk for developing osteoarthritis in the knees. It can also slow progression of the disease in people who already have it and delay costly knee replacement surgery.
- Moderate physical activity relieves arthritis pain and stiffness and improves a person's mood and outlook.



## State Programs in Action: Pine Apple, Alabama

Arthritis affects 1.1 million Alabamans—that's more than one in three people. Nearly half of these people have household incomes below \$20,000 a year, and half have not completed high school. For people who live outside the major metropolitan areas of Alabama, access to health care continues to be a problem.



With CDC support, Alabama is developing and evaluating a community project to improve access to arthritis care in Pine Apple, an African American community in rural Wilcox County. This county has low socioeconomic status and poor health indicators. The project builds on an existing model program by adding the Arthritis Self-Help Course.

Developing partnerships is a key component of the project. Because of the partnerships developed, this project has already improved access to care. A rheumatologist now travels 2 hours from Tuscaloosa to hold a clinic one day a month. At the clinic, arthritis patients receive specialized care and treatment that was previously unavailable in this medically underserved area.

Community-based programs such as the Pine Apple project are effective because they are responsive to the needs and culture of the community. This project may serve as a model for reaching underserved populations in other states as well.

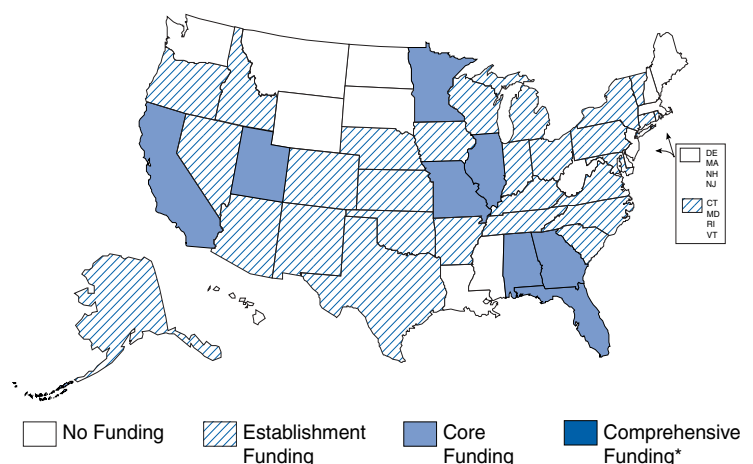
## Effective Strategies and Promising Approaches

- The Arthritis Self-Help Course, developed at Stanford University, is a 6-week course that teaches people how to manage their arthritis and lessen its effects. Arthritis pain declined by 20% and costly physician visits were reduced by 40% among people who completed the course. Unfortunately, fewer than 1% of Americans with arthritis participate in such programs, and courses are not offered in all areas of the United States. Making the Arthritis Self-Help Course and other self-management strategies a routine part of health care for people with arthritis should help reduce arthritis-related pain and health care costs.
- Increasing public awareness about the importance of early diagnosis should increase appropriate management for inflammatory arthritis and connective tissue diseases.
- Getting the message out about the benefits of a healthy weight and moderate physical activity should help people with arthritis.

## Hope for the Future

CDC is working with the Arthritis Foundation and other partners to carry out the *National Arthritis Action Plan: A Public Health Strategy*. The plan was developed to guide the use of the nation's resources to decrease the burden of arthritis for all Americans and increase the quality of life of those affected by arthritis. It provides a blueprint for reducing pain, activity limitations, and disability among people with arthritis, as well as for preventing certain types of arthritis, as called for in *Healthy People 2010*.

### CDC Funding for State Arthritis Programs, Fiscal Year 2002



\*Currently no states are funded at this level.

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