



COMMUNITY HEALTH DATA BASE

An Information Service of Public Health Management Corporation

Data findings

ARTHRITIS IN SOUTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA

May 2010

Arthritis is inflammation of the joints, and refers to over 100 different conditions, including osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, gout, scleroderma, lupus and fibromyalgia. About 20% of adults across the country have been diagnosed with arthritis, and about 7 million Americans feel that arthritis limits their ability to perform everyday tasks.

Arthritis is the second most common cause of work disability. While we may think of arthritis as a condition common among older adults, children and adults of all ages are affected (1).

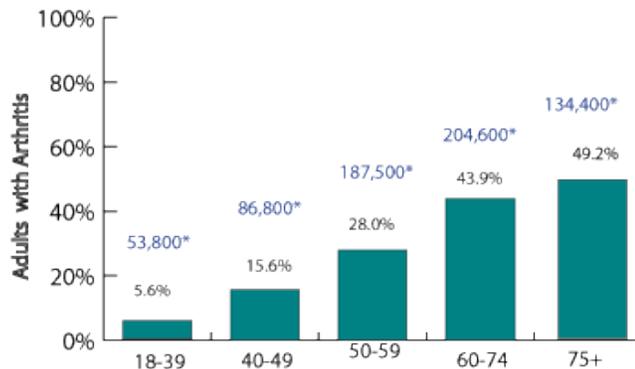
In recognition of Arthritis Awareness Month in May, this article presents data from the 2008 Southeastern Pennsylvania Household Health Survey on adults with arthritis. The Southeastern Pennsylvania Household Health Survey is a biennial, random digit dial telephone survey of over 10,000 households in the five-county region of Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery, and Philadelphia Counties.

An Overview of Arthritis in SEPA

Nearly a quarter of Southeastern Pennsylvania adults (22.7%) have some type of arthritis, representing about 667,000 individuals in our region. The portion of the population with arthritis ranges from 17.5% in Chester County to 25% in Philadelphia. Reflecting national data, arthritis is more common among women in SEPA than among men; almost three in ten women in Southeastern Pennsylvania (27%) have some kind of arthritis, compared with 17.8% of men.

While the risk of arthritis increases with age, many younger SEPA residents have arthritis and arthritis-related conditions. About 53,800 SEPA adults between the ages of 18 and 39 have arthritis, as well as about 86,000 adults from 40 to 49 years of age.

Figure 1. Adults with Arthritis by Age Group, SEPA 2008.



Source: PHMC's Community Health Data Base 2008 Southeastern Pennsylvania Household Health Survey
* Approximate number of adults with arthritis within each age range.



Arthritis and Health

Arthritis is about more than joint pain. The Southeastern Pennsylvania Household Health Survey data show that adults with arthritis are almost twice as likely to describe their sleep as restless than are adults without arthritis (16.9% compared with 8.6%).

In addition, adults with arthritis are more likely to rate their health as fair or poor than are adults without arthritis.

Overall, 38.1% of SEPA adults with arthritis describe their health as fair or poor, compared with 13.9% of those without arthritis. This holds across age categories.

Arthritis and Physical Activity

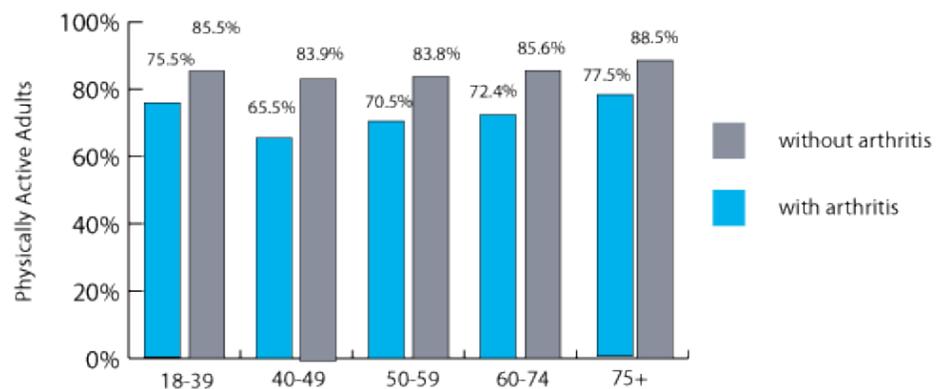
The Arthritis Foundation recommends physical activity and weight loss to help with arthritis symptoms. In Southeastern Pennsylvania, 70% of adults with arthritis are overweight or obese.

Adults with arthritis in Southeastern Pennsylvania are less likely to use neighborhood recreation facilities than adults without arthritis. About six in ten adults with arthritis (59.1%) report no use of neighborhood public recreation facilities in the past year, compared with about four in ten adults without arthritis who have not used neighborhood public recreation facilities.

Adults with arthritis are also less likely to be physically active than are adults without arthritis. While 85% of adults without arthritis describe themselves as physically active on a regular basis, only 72.3% of adults with arthritis describe themselves the same way. This also holds across age categories.

Among adults with arthritis who are not physically active on a regular basis, six in ten (59.5%) report that the reason they are not more active is their health.

Figure 2. Physical Activity Among Adults with and without Arthritis by Age Group, SEPA 2008



Source: PHMC's Community Health Data Base 2008 Southeastern Pennsylvania Household Health Survey

Across Southeastern Pennsylvania, many adults have some type of arthritis. Arthritis affects men and women of all ages in our region, and affects everyone differently. Some SEPA residents with arthritis feel like they aren't well enough to exercise, while others are physically active. The Arthritis Foundation recommends physical activity as the best way to fight arthritis pain, building muscle, strengthening joints and improving sleep and overall health.

For more information about the Community Health Data Base, the Southeastern Pennsylvania Household Health Survey or arthritis in Southeastern Pennsylvania, contact Rose Malinowski Weingartner at rosemw@phmc.org or 215 985 2572.

(1) <http://www.arthritis.org>