

Do You Know the Face of Arthritis?

Arthritis is not an inevitable part of aging. It affects 43 million people — or one in six Americans — including children, teens and senior citizens alike.

Here in our desert communities, one in three people are affected by arthritis and related diseases.

For these people, arthritis is often a daily struggle that limits even the simplest activities that others may take for granted, such as dressing or bathing. It is the nation's No. 1 cause of disability, costing the U.S. economy more than \$82 billion each year in medical care and lost wages.

People often think of arthritis as one disease that mainly affects the elderly. In fact, arthritis affects people in all age groups and is much more serious than the "minor aches and pains" often portrayed by the media.

DID YOU KNOW... There are more than 120 different forms of arthritis, including osteoarthritis, fibromyalgia, lupus, rheumatoid arthritis and osteoporosis. More than 300,000 children suffer from Juvenile Rheumatoid Arthritis. It has been projected that by the year 2020, one in five Americans — more than 60 million people — will have arthritis. Two-thirds of people with arthritis are under the age of 65. Nearly two-thirds of people with arthritis are women. In fact, women between the ages of 35 and 55 years are the fastest-growing group to be diagnosed with arthritis and related diseases.

In a recent survey by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 40 percent of respondents who said they had arthritis had not seen a doctor or rheumatologist, indicating they believed that nothing could be done.

As your partner in taking control of your arthritis, the Arthritis Foundation is here to help. Whether you or a family member has been diagnosed with arthritis or are experiencing joint pain, you can take an active role in joint health now.

Formed in 1948, the Arthritis Foundation offers free information and referral and more than 100 programs per week — most at no charge — that are designed to improve the quality of life for people with arthritis, including warm-water and land-based exercise classes, selfhelp groups, support groups, community educational forums and a multitude of educational books and brochures. For more information on the many available programs and resources in the community, please call the Arthritis Foundation at 760-773-3076. To register for arthritis programs that are offered at the Arthritis Education Program at Eisenhower Medical Center, please call 760-773- 4535.

To learn more about arthritis, the many resources available and how the Arthritis Foundation is improving lives through research, please plan to attend a free one-hour community information meeting. "Arthritis Answers 2002" meetings will be held twice weekly this fall and will include continental breakfast, lunch and afternoon refreshment meetings. For a schedule of upcoming meetings and to reserve your seat now for the "Arthritis Answers 2002" fall meetings, please call the Coachella Valley Branch of the Arthritis Foundation at 760-773-3076 or the Arthritis Education Program at 760-773-4535, the central sources for information, education and referral on the subject of arthritis.

Marti Myers has been with the Arthritis Foundation for 12 years, initially providing oversight of programs and services, later serving as Board Chair, and for the past seven years has been responsible for the overall administration and operations of the agency. She also is a teacher and a published author in other health-care related fields.