fact sheet

Arthritis Among Adults in Colorado

Jason Gannon, Health Statistics Section

Introduction

Arthritis is the leading cause of disability in the United States, with more than 40 million people reporting that a doctor has diagnosed them with the condition. Of those diagnosed, 16 million are limited in their daily activities because of joint pain. Recent data from the 2005 Colorado Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS)[1] indicate that almost one-quarter (23%) of people in Colorado are living with some form of arthritis. Table 1 shows that the prevalence of arthritis is higher among females, older respondents, and obese individuals but lower among Hispanics.

Table 1. Prevalence of arthritis, Colorado adults, BRFSS 2005

	Percent	95% Confidence Interval	
Persons with Arthritis	23.3%	22.1%	24.4%
Gender			
Male	19.8%	18.1%	21.4%
Female	26.8%	25.2%	28.4%
Age (years)			
18-44	10.5%	9.2%	11.7%
45-54	28.1%	25.3%	30.8%
55-64	40.2%	36.8%	43.6%
65+	52.3%	49.2%	55.4%
Race/Ethnicity[2]			
White/non-Hispanic	25.2%	23.9%	26.5%
Black/non-Hispanic	24.7%	16.3%	33.1%
Other	25.5%	18.5%	32.5%
Hispanic	12.9%	10.5%	15.4%
Body Mass Index (BMI)[3]			
Neither Overweight nor Obese (<25)	18.6%	17.0%	20.2%
Overweight (25 - 29.9)	24.8%	22.7%	26.8%
Obese (>=30.0)	32.2%	29.1%	35.3%

A Closer Look

When comparing individuals who have received a diagnosis of arthritis to those who have not, differences become readily apparent (Table 2).
Individuals with arthritis are more likely to report:

➤ Diabetes;

➤ High blood pressure;

➤ Less/limited leisure time physical activity;

➤ Use of special equipment such as a cane, a wheelchair, a bed, or a telephone;

➤ Overall general health identified as fair or poor.

References

[1] The Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) includes all fifty states, three territories, and the District of Columbia, making it the largest ongoing telephone health survey in the world. The Colorado BRFSS was initiated in 1990 as a joint project of the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The BRFSS is designed to monitor the prevalence of health behaviors and preventive health practices associated with the leading causes of premature death, disability, and disease. Data collected over an entire year are combined and weighted to the age and sex distribution of the state to develop statewide estimates of various health behaviors. Data collected over an entire year are combined and weighted to the age and sex distribution of the state to develop statewide estimates of various health behaviors.

[2] The Health Statistics Section joins the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in recognizing that race and ethnicity do not represent valid biological or genetic categories but are social constructs with cultural and historical meaning.

[3] Body Mass Index (BMI) is a number calculated from a person's weight and height. It is a reliable indicator of body fatness for people but does not measure body fat directly. Research has shown that BMI correlates to direct measures of body fat and can be considered an alternative for other direct measures. Additionally, BMI is an inexpensive and easy toperform method of screening for weight categories that may lead to health problems. It is calculated as follows: [weight (lb) / (height (in) x height (in))] x 703.

Additional Information

For more information about arthritis in Colorado visit the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment's Arthritis Program Web site at www.cdphe.state.co.us/pp/arthritis/arthritishom.asp

For more information about the Colorado BRFSS, visit the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment Web site at www.cdphe.state.co.us/hs/brfss, or contact the Health Statistics Section at the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, 303-692-2160.

Table 2. Health and lifestyle status of those with and without arthritis, Colorado adults, BRFSS 2005

Indicator	Persons with Arthritis	95% Confidence Interval		Persons without Arthritis	95% Confidence Interval	
Diabetes	9.4%	8.0%	10.9%	3.3%	2.7%	3.9%
High blood pressure	38.7%	36.1%	41.3%	14.4%	13.2%	15.5%
Participated in leisure time physical activity	77.7%	75.5%	80.0%	84.5%	83.2%	85.8%
Limited due to physical, emotional, or mental problems	36.4%	33.8%	39.0%	10.1%	9.0%	11.2%
Health problem that requires the use of special equipment such as a cane, a wheelchair, a special bed, or a special telephone	12.9%	11.1%	14.7%	2.1%	1.7%	2.6%
General health rated as fair or poor	23.6%	21.2%	25.9%	9.3%	8.1%	10.4%

Almost 800,000 individuals in Colorado are living with arthritis. Another 700,000 suffer with joint pain or stiffness that has not been formally diagnosed. Table 3 highlights the difference in symptom management between those diagnosed with arthritis and those with joint pain.

Table 3. Management of symptoms by those with arthritis and those with joint pain, Colorado adults, BRFSS 2005

Indicator	Persons with Diagnosed Arthritis	95% Confidence Interval		Persons with Joint Pain	95% Confidence Interval	
Able to do most/all things since diagnosis/joint pain began	77.4%	75.1%	79.6%	87.8%	85.1%	90.5%
Health professional suggested losing weight to help with symptoms	28.5%	26.1%	30.9%	14.1%	11.6%	16.6%
Health professional suggested physical activity to help with symptoms	52.7%	50.0%	55.5%	34.0%	30.3%	37.7%
Taken an educational course to learn how to manage symptoms	12.2%	10.5%	14.0%	10.1%	7.4%	12.8%