



## **ARTHRITIS**

Arthritis is a chronic disorder that affects one in seven Canadians, half of whom are between the ages of 30 to 50 years old. In the US, Arthritis is the number one cause of disability, affecting over 40 million individuals.

Arthritis includes approximately 100 inflammatory and non-inflammatory diseases that affect the body's joints, connective tissue, and other supporting tissues such as tendons, cartilage, blood vessels, and internal organs.

More common forms of arthritis include:

- Osteoarthritis
- Rheumatoid Arthritis
- Gout
- Ankylosing Spondylitis, a chronic inflammatory disease of the spine
- Psoriatic arthritis.

Arthritis can also develop as a result of an infection. Symptoms of arthritis may include swelling in one or more joints, early morning stiffness, recurring pain or tenderness in any joint, obvious redness and warmth in a joint, unexplained weight loss, fever, or weakness combined with joint pain that last more than two weeks are typical symptoms of arthritis. Skin, joint, kidney, lung, heart, nervous system, and blood cell infections may accompany fatigue and difficulty in sleeping.

Individuals with Arthritis tend to experience their disease in 'flares', where the disease will become more prevalent and then disappears again. As a result, an individual may not experience any symptoms for several weeks, and then be affected without warning. In some cases, the disease can remain dormant for months or years, before flaring up again. In addition, the level and extent of arthritis varies greatly from one individual to another.

### **Persons with Arthritis In The Workplace**

#### Technology And Adaptive Devices

Different adaptive devices are available for the workplace, depending on what part of the body is affected by arthritis. For example, an individual with arthritis in their hands may be able to walk without any pain, but may experience great difficulty typing. In this case, devices to help with page turning, writing, and holding are all appropriate to use. Rather than helping with the work itself, the devices are designed to help with joint protection, energy conservation and pain management.

Devices include:

- Large buttoned telephones
- Curved computer keyboards
- Joint-friendly mouse



- Large-grip pen
- Door-knob attachment
- Ergonomic resources, such as furniture that positions you to work effectively and with minimum physical stress.

### **Accommodations for Individuals With Arthritis:**

#### Daily Living:

- Allow use of a personal attendant at work
- Allow use of a service animal at work
- Ensure that the facility is accessible
- Move workstation closer to the restroom
- Allow longer breaks
- Refer to appropriate community services
- Allow access to a refrigerator

#### Fatigue/Weakness:

- Reduce or eliminate physical exertion and workplace stress
- Schedule periodic rest breaks away from the workstation
- Allow a flexible work schedule and flexible use of leave time
- Allow work from home
- Implement ergonomic workstation design
- Provide a scooter or other mobility aid if walking cannot be reduced

#### Fine Motor Impairment: Add sub heading

- Implement ergonomic workstation design including arm supports, page turner, and book holder
- Provide alternative computer and telephone access, writing, and grip aids

#### Gross Motor Impairment:

- Modify the work-site and workstation to make them accessible
- Provide parking close to the work-site
- Provide an accessible route of travel to other work areas used by the employee
- Adjust desk height if wheelchair or scooter is used
- Ensure that materials and equipment are within reach range
- Move workstation close to other work areas, office equipment, and break rooms

#### Stress:

- Develop strategies to deal with work problems before they arise
- Provide sensitivity training to coworkers
- Allow telephone calls during work hours to doctors and others for support
- Provide information on counselling and employee assistance programs

#### Temperature Sensitivity:

- Modify worksite temperature and dress code



- Use fan/air-conditioner or heater at the workstation
- Allow work from home during extremely hot or cold weather
- Maintain the ventilation system and redirect air conditioning and heating vents
- Provide an office with separate temperature control

This information was compiled by Open Door Group to assist BC businesses to have successful working relationship with persons with disabilities in our communities.

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