

## **Arthritic Foot & Ankle Care**

### **Arthritis**

Arthritis is a disabling and occasionally crippling disease afflicting almost 40 million Americans. In some forms, it appears to be hereditary. While the prevalence of arthritis increases with age, all people from infancy to middle age are potential victims. People over 50 are the primary targets.

Arthritis is an inflammation and swelling of the cartilage and lining of the joints, generally accompanied by an increase in the fluid in the joints.

It is often a part of complex diseases that may involve more than 100 disorders. If the feet seem more susceptible to arthritis than other parts of the body, it is because each foot has 33 joints that can be afflicted, and there is no way to avoid the pain of the tremendous weight-bearing load on the feet.

Arthritic feet can result in loss of mobility and independence, but that may be avoided with early diagnosis and proper medical care.

### **Symptoms**

- Early morning stiffness
- Limitation in motion of joint
- Recurring pain or tenderness in any joint
- Redness or heat in a joint
- Skin changes, including rashes and growths
- Swelling in one or more joints

### **Forms of Arthritis**

Osteoarthritis is the most common form of arthritis. It is frequently called degenerative joint disease or "wear and tear" arthritis. Aging usually brings on a breakdown in cartilage, and pain gets progressively more severe, although it can be relieved with rest. Dull, throbbing nighttime pain is characteristic, and it may be accompanied by muscle weakness or deterioration.

Overweight people are particularly susceptible to osteoarthritis. The additional weight contributes to the deterioration of cartilage and the development of bone spurs.

Rheumatoid arthritis is a major crippling disorder, and perhaps the most serious form of arthritis. It is a complex, chronic inflammatory group of diseases, often affecting more than a dozen smaller joints during its course, and frequently in both ankles, or the index fingers of both hands.

### **Arthritis can be treated in many ways, including**

- Physical therapy and exercise
- Medication
- Orthoses or specially prescribed shoes