Understanding Arthritis

This booklet is designed to help you, your family and caregiver understand your arthritis.

It is important that you, your family/caregivers and your health care providers (doctors, nurses, therapists and other health care professionals) work as a team and be involved in managing your condition. The more you know about arthritis, the more you can be involved in your care and treatment.

A cure for arthritis doesn’t exist (at least not yet). However, arthritis is a chronic condition that can be treated and managed. Arthritis may be painful, but there are things you can do to feel better. By working with your health care team and following a few simple guidelines, you may improve your quality of life. You can make the best choices and set your goals so that your life remains interesting and enjoyable.

When you are able to recognize the symptoms of your condition, you can keep your doctors and nurses updated on your condition and receive appropriate and timely treatment.

This booklet will provide you with some facts about arthritis and give you some ideas about what to do, so you can keep doing the things you want to do. The word “arthritis” is used in this booklet as a general term to refer to arthritis and other rheumatic diseases. Keep this booklet as a resource for yourself, your family and caregivers. It contains various forms that can be used to write down your vital signs, medicines, treatments and to record pain and other important information.

As your nurse/therapist instructs you in the information contained in this booklet, please ask questions during their visits. You may also call our office if something is unclear or if you have questions and/or concerns.

We look forward to being a member of your health care team!

Your Professional Home Care Staff
# Arthritis Patient Education Guide

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### Purpose:
This booklet is for informational purposes only and is not designed to replace your physician's advice or treatments. The information contained in this booklet may change, as practice guidelines change.

### Disclaimer:
We have attempted to make the information contained in this booklet as accurate as possible; however, MedForms makes no guarantees as to its accuracy and assumes no liability for the use of its forms and publications.

### Research Resources:
National Institutes of Health (NIH), National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases (NIAMS), Mayo Clinic, Arthritis Foundation, Centers for Disease Control

### Professional Consultants:
MedForms would like to thank the following home health agencies for their time, input, clinical guidance and piloting of the booklet in their companies with home care patients and staff.

**Allied Home Care**, Boynton Beach, FL; **Broward Home Care**, Ft. Lauderdale, FL; **CareSouth**, Augusta, GA; **Riverside Home Care**, Newport News, VA; **St. Joseph Hospital Home Care**, Ft. Wayne, IN

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SECTION II. The Disease Process

WHAT IS ARTHRITIS?

The word arthritis means joint inflammation (in-flah-MAY-shun). Arthritis can affect joints (places where two bones meet) in any part of the body. Over time, the joint can become severely damaged. Arthritis is often a chronic disease, which means that it can affect you over a long period of time. At this time, the only type of arthritis that can be cured is arthritis caused by infections.

There are over 100 forms of arthritis and other rheumatic diseases (various conditions characterized by inflammation or pain in muscles, joints or fibrous tissue). These diseases may cause pain, stiffness and swelling in joints and other supporting structures of the body, such as muscles, tendons, ligaments and bones. Some forms can also affect other parts of the body, including various internal organs. Rheumatic diseases affect people of all races and ages; however, some are more common among certain populations.

Arthritis is one of the most common diseases in this country and the leading cause of disability in the United States. Arthritis affects about one in every five Americans (nearly 50 million adults). Half of all people age 65 and older have arthritis. By 2030, it is estimated that 67 million (25% of all adults over age 18) will have some form of arthritis. Approximately 294,000 children in the United States live with arthritis, usually resulting from trauma or injury.

The cause of arthritis is unknown. Researchers continue to search for the cause of the major types of arthritis. While we don't know what causes arthritis, we do know what can make it worse. In the meantime, many effective treatments for arthritis have been developed by scientists and physicians. The key to any arthritis treatment program is rest, exercise, a healthy, well-balanced diet and learning to use your joints the right way. Treatment is different for each kind of arthritis.

This booklet focuses on two of the most common types of arthritis:
1. Osteoarthritis
2. Rheumatoid Arthritis
This file is just a small sample of this booklet

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