What is a family health history?
A family health history is a portrait of the shared lives and health of your extended family.

Screening recommendations

... for individuals WITH A FAMILY HISTORY of arthritis

Family history is a risk factor for arthritis but there are no specific screening guidelines for individuals with a family history of arthritis. Consult your health care provider if you have joint symptoms for more than two weeks.

... for individuals WITH NO KNOWN FAMILY HISTORY of arthritis

Consult your health care provider if you have any of the following symptoms for more than two weeks: swelling in one or more joints, stiffness around the joints that lasts for at least one hour in the early morning, constant or recurring pain or tenderness in a joint, difficulty using or moving a joint normally, or warmth or redness in a joint.
Arthritis risk factors and what you can do about them

Things you can change

- **Overweight and obesity:** Excess weight can contribute to both the onset and progression of knee osteoarthritis
- **Joint injuries:** Sports injuries, occupation-related injuries and repetitive use joint injuries can increase the risk of arthritis
- **Infection:** Many microbial agents can infect joints and potentially cause the development of various forms of arthritis
- **Lyme disease:** If Lyme disease is untreated, chronic arthritis may occur

Things you can’t change

- **Age:** Risk increases with age
- **Gender:** Overall arthritis is more common in women. In Minnesota, 30.2% of adult women have arthritis, compared to 20.7% of adult men, but specific types of arthritis vary by gender: rheumatoid arthritis and lupus are more common in women; gout is more common in men. Osteoarthritis is more common in men before age 50 and in women in later decades.
- **Genetics:** Genes have been found that are associated with a higher risk of certain types of arthritis, such as rheumatoid arthritis (RA), systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE), and ankylosing spondylitis
- **Family history:** A family history of arthritis, especially in first-degree relatives (parent, sibling, offspring), increases risk, particularly for osteoarthritis, lupus and gout

What can you do if you have a family history of arthritis?

- Practice healthy behaviors including healthy eating, regular physical activity and injury prevention
- Eat a healthy diet including a variety of fruits and vegetables
- Maintain a healthy weight
- Do at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity every day, if possible
- Avoid sports injuries, occupation-related injuries and repetitive use joint injuries
- Talk to your health care provider about your family health history of arthritis
- Talk to your health care provider to make a personalized plan to maintain your health
- See your health care provider if you have symptoms of arthritis and follow his/her advice
- Consult your health care provider if you have chronic joint symptoms

Sources

- Arthritis Foundation, www.arthritis.org

If you require this document in another format, such as large print, Braille or cassette tape, call 651-201-3609.