

# Four million Canadians suffer pain of arthritis

By IRENE GENTLE  
The Champion

Arthritis is booming in the baby boomer generation. But everyone should be on the look out for the stiffness and pain associated with the condition.

Today, about four million Canadians suffer from one of hundreds of forms of arthritis.

And they'll be joined by another hundred thousand sufferers within a year as the aging boomers grow susceptible to stiff or inflamed joints.

But arthritis is indiscriminate, and tots can be stricken as well.

"Juvenile arthritis is rampant," said Audrea-Lear Costigan of the Milton branch of the Arthritis Society.

The many forms of arthritis combine to make it one of Canada's top three chronic conditions, alongside heart disease and high blood pressure and hay fever and allergies.

But the breadth of suffering makes it a tough condition to pin down.

It can range from a mild stiffness in the joints to the potentially-deadly form of rheumatoid arthritis, lupus.

And since only research can help, Milton residents are asked to give generously at the Arthritis Society's September door-to-door campaign.

It raised \$20,000 last year, and organizers are hoping to drum up \$25,000 this time around.

Community support is needed in the form of both donations and volunteer canvassers.

Canvassing can be done alone, in tandem or in groups and takes up just a few hours.

To volunteer, call Audrea Lear-Costigan at 878-9151.

## Golf tourney

Pitching in with fundraising is the Holy Rosary Knights of Columbus.

Its Fourth Annual Golf Tournament will be held Sunday, Sept. 24 at the Granite Ridge Golf Club.

Registration is at noon, with a 1 p.m. shotgun start.

The cost for 18 holes of golf, a power cart and dinner is \$95. Dinner alone costs \$35.

The event raised about \$6,000 last year.

To register for the tournament, call Jim Powers at 878-6942, Tom Pepper at 878-0967, or Livio Bonin at 878-5323.

The first step in managing arthritis is diagnosis.

"It has to be tested properly," said Ms Lear-Costigan. "The other point is to get it early. That helps."

Once a diagnosis is made, steps can be taken to live well within the confines of the condition.

New medication has helped, and Ms Lear-Costigan is optimistic a cure is around the corner.

"They're really making strides" she said. "They're getting closer by the minute."

Exercise — often in warmed pool water — can do wonders to ease the symptoms of arthritis.

"People can't just take it easy and lie down. They have to keep moving," she said. "It would be worse if they sat down and watched television all the time."

The Milton Leisure Centre offers an hour of in-pool exercises for arthritis sufferers Monday to Thursday at 11 a.m.

"They may feel a little stiff when they come in but they come out singing 'Oh What a Wonderful World,'" said Ms Lear-Costigan.

Some teaching hospitals also offer lessons on how to structure indoor living spaces such as kitchens to maximize comfort and make the most of limited mobility.

For others, surgery could be the answer. "They've been successful with hip operations, and knee operations are coming along," said Ms Lear-Costigan. "Sometimes they have to do something with the fingers if it gets so bad they can't hold on to anything."

Arthritis comes at a high cost, with about 10 per cent of the nation's total health care expenditure going toward its research and treatment.

But the personal toll is equally high. According to Arthritis Society statistics, about 50 per cent of arthritis sufferers are unable to work due to the disease.

And 2.7 million work days are lost each year due to the restricted movement associated with arthritis.

Also, more than 75 per cent of sufferers are dependent on others due to their condition.

For up to 30 per cent, showering, light housework and cooking become impossible.

For more information on arthritis, call 1-800-321-1433, or log on to [www.arthritis.ca](http://www.arthritis.ca).

To make an on-line donation to the Arthritis Society, look up [www.clickfor-cure.com](http://www.clickfor-cure.com).



Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

Arthritis Society volunteers (from left) Jim Powers, Audrea Lear-Costigan and Mayor Gord Krantz hold up the organization's flag while local seniors take part in an aquatic class to officially launch Arthritis Month in September. Today, about four million Canadians suffer from one of hundreds of forms of arthritis. And they'll be joined by another hundred thousand sufferers within a year as the aging boomers grow susceptible to stiff or inflamed joints.

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