

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Donia Crime
communications 21
(404) 814-1330
dcrime@c21pr.com

Carol Galbreath
Arthritis Foundation
(404) 965-7595
cgalbreath@arthritis.org

Physical Activity Is Natural Pain Reliever for Arthritis *Study Shows It's Possible to Manage Arthritis Pain by Moving More*

ATLANTA, April 8, 2008 – It may seem counterintuitive to exercise when suffering with joint pain, but physical activity is actually a natural pain reliever for most people suffering from arthritis. A recent study published in *Arthritis Care and Research* journal concluded that regular exercise, specifically the Arthritis Foundation Exercise Program, is an effective course in significantly improving and managing arthritis pain. This is good news for the aging population of U.S. baby boomers who want to get back to basics with a natural remedy for pain. In fact, arthritis is projected to increase by 40 percent, affecting 67 million Americans, in the next two decades.

The in-depth study looked at the effectiveness of the Arthritis Foundation Exercise Program, developed in 1987 to reduce pain and stiffness by keeping joints flexible and muscles strong. Key findings of the study include participants reporting a decrease in pain and fatigue, an increase in upper and lower extremity function, and an increase in strength after participating in the basic, eight-week exercise program. Also, participants who continued the exercise program independently, beyond eight weeks, sustained improvement in reduced stiffness.

“The study showed that the exercise program is suitable for every fitness level, even inactive older individuals,” said author of the study Leigh Callahan, Ph.D., Thurston Arthritis Research Center, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. “Many people believe the myth that exercise exacerbates their symptoms. The truth revealed in the study is that symptoms improved with exercise.”

Exercising for joint health is different than exercising for cardio health. People living with arthritis don't have to sweat to achieve success. The basic eight-week Arthritis Foundation Exercise Program consists of low-impact routines with gentle range-of-motion movements that can be done while sitting or standing.

“Even minor lifestyle changes like taking a 10-minute walk three times a day can reduce the impact of arthritis on a person's daily activities and help to prevent developing more painful arthritis,” explains Patience White, M.D., chief public health officer of the Arthritis Foundation. “Physical activity can actually reduce pain naturally and decrease dependence on pain medications.”

-more-

Physical Activity is Natural Pain Reliever for Arthritis / page 2

About the Study

The objective of the study was to evaluate the basic eight-week Arthritis Foundation Exercise Program for improvements in symptoms, functioning, level of physical activity and psychosocial outcomes. A total of 346 individuals with self-reported arthritis from 18 sites participated in a randomized controlled trial. The eight-week exercise program consisted of exercise twice weekly for one hour. The study participants had a mean age of 70 years (ranging from 32 to 94 years old), 90 percent were female, 75 percent were white and 60 percent had more than a high school degree.

About the Arthritis Foundation Exercise Program

The Arthritis Foundation Exercise Program, formerly known as People with Arthritis Can Exercise (PACE), is a program developed by the Arthritis Foundation in 1987 to promote self-management of arthritis through exercise. The program is offered at basic and advanced levels, and is available throughout the country in many convenient community-based settings. A detailed listing of classes in local areas can be found on the Arthritis Foundation's Web site at www.arthritis.org.

About the Arthritis Foundation

The Arthritis Foundation is the leading health organization addressing the needs of some 46 million Americans living with arthritis, the nation's most common cause of disability. Founded in 1948, with headquarters in Atlanta, the Arthritis Foundation has multiple service points located throughout the country.

The Arthritis Foundation is the largest private, not-for-profit contributor to arthritis research in the world, funding more than \$400 million in research grants since 1948. Celebrating its 60th anniversary this year, the foundation helps individuals take control of arthritis by providing public health education; pursuing public policy and legislation; and conducting evidence-based programs to improve the quality of life for those living with arthritis. Information is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week at 1-800-283-7800 or www.arthritis.org.

###