

The **Examiner**

A Publication of Allergy A.R.T.S.

The Many Faces of Arthritis

Arthritis wears many masks, and can affect each individual patient in different ways. The more than 100 medical conditions gathered under the arthritis umbrella share one common element: all affect the musculoskeletal system – in particular, the joints of the body – but are not limited to just those structures.

Joint problems include pain, inflammation, stiffness and damage to the joint cartilage and surrounding tissues. Those afflicted may eventually need to deal with instability, visible deformities and/or weakness that make even the simplest daily tasks – such as tying shoes, typing, walking, brushing teeth, etc. – pain-filled, frustrating challenges.

Some forms of arthritis also are systemic, meaning that they can affect the entire body. Damage might occur in almost any organ or system, including the skin, blood vessels, kidneys, heart and lungs.

More than 45 million adults and 300,000 children suffer from some form of arthritis in the United States. Women are affected more often than men, but it strikes people in virtually all socio-economic groups and increasingly with age. The cost to the U.S. economy for medical care and indirect expenses such as lost income and reduced productivity approaches \$128 billion per year.

The good news is that nearly every form of arthritis can be managed by working closely with your doctor and arthritis support network.

HELP IS HERE

Unfortunately, there is no cure for arthritis. However, by working with a specialist like Dr. Saadeh, patients can be properly diagnosed and then placed on a disease management program especially suited to their unique situation.

COMMON FORMS OF ARTHRITIS

- **Rheumatoid arthritis** – an autoimmune disease in which the joint lining is inflamed due to the immune system's activity. Serious and disabling, it affects mostly women.
- **Osteoarthritis** – a degenerative disease in which joint cartilage deteriorates, causing pain and loss of movement as bone rubs on bone. It is the most common form of arthritis.
- **Gout** – a painful condition that most often attacks small joints, especially the big toe. Found mostly in men, gout results from a defect in body chemistry. It can usually be completely controlled with medication and diet changes.
- **Juvenile arthritis** – covers all childhood arthritis, including rheumatoid, lupus, ankylosing spondylitis and others.
- **Ankylosing spondylitis** – a type of arthritis that often affects the spine, resulting in inflammation that encourages the bones of the spine to grow together.
- **Systemic lupus erythematosus** – a serious disorder that may inflame and damage joints and other connective tissues throughout the body.
- **Scleroderma** – a disease of the body's connective tissue that causes thickening and hardening of the skin.
- **Fibromyalgia** – a widespread pain that affects muscles and bone attachments and is mostly found in women.

According to the Arthritis Foundation, many people with serious types of arthritis that were severely disabling as recently as a generation ago are now leading full, productive lives. New drugs and treatments, exercise programs, surgeries and careful self-management promise a bright future. ■

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Full of Life



Maureen McCrory Munn Poole Roberts has suffered from severe allergies all of her life, but she never has let them slow her down. You name the symptom, she's had it: hay fever, skin rashes, asthma, psoriasis ... one doctor even told her she was the most allergic person he had ever treated.

Born in Dalhart, Maureen attended school in Clovis, NM, and then studied at Colorado Woman's College in Denver for two years. While a student at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque, she met her husband, Kenneth Munn, with whom she eventually moved to Las Cruces, NM.

Sadly, Maureen found herself widowed when Kenneth was killed in a light plane crash, leaving her to raise two young children. She kept his business going for a year, then accepted a position at the Chamber of Commerce. Maureen's allergies kept her feeling bad physically most of the time, but she kept up her spirits by making it a point to enjoy her children and her life.

Maureen later moved to Amarillo with her second husband, Russell Poole, in order to help out her aging parents. "I felt pretty good here for a while, but then my allergies came back," she explained.

Eventually, Maureen heard about Dr. Saadeh at Allergy A.R.T.S. "I feel so comfortable there," she explained. "They take such good care of me, especially Dr. Saadeh and Clint Bell. Recently, when I was vacationing in Red River, I had a bad attack and called in. They told me exactly what to do. They have even referred me to other physicians when they thought I should have something checked out."

Over the years, Maureen lost her second husband and both of her children, Brian Munn and Nancy Greene. Her only grandchild, Shea Leigh Greene, lives in Albuquerque. "But I'm not alone," she said cheerfully. "I started line dancing, if you can believe it, and met my wonderful husband Daryl Roberts. We travel and have fun together."

Fun includes two special cats: Tasha and Velvet. "Of course, I am very allergic to them, but the Allergy A.R.T.S. people changed my custom-mixed formula for my allergy shots, and after just an injection or two, I feel so much better. And we love our dear cats," Maureen said.

Dr. Saadeh also recently diagnosed Maureen as having rheumatoid arthritis. Upon further investigation, he determined she probably has had a form of lupus for years, which may explain some of her nearly lifelong problems.

Don't think such challenges will slow her down, however. Daryl has built a special place for the cats to ride in their van, and the couple is off on the next adventure, with Maureen feeling "great" – thanks to the Allergy A.R.T.S. team!



The "Whole" You

Allergy A.R.T.S. by its very name and nature lets you know that we are, for the most part, a specialty clinic, as opposed to a general practice. Our areas of expertise include the diagnosis and treatment of asthma, allergies, arthritis in its various forms, and other autoimmune diseases.

Still, we understand that no disease or condition is isolated from the rest of the body. In order to serve you best, we must consider other health issues you may be facing.

For example, if you come to us for help with your asthma attacks, we may need to know how much you are exposed to cigarette smoke or other allergens.

If you are over the age of 50, and are here to be treated for arthritis, it helps us to set up the right management program if we also know whether or not you suffer from low bone density and an increased risk for osteoporosis and fractures.

Knowing about your cardiac and digestive systems helps us determine which medications are best for you.

Even the state of your emotional and mental health is an important factor in treating the "whole" you.

Therefore, when you visit us, we encourage you to share facts about your health history and current lifestyle. We are dedicated to helping you live the very best life possible.

To your health!

Constantine Saadeh, M.D., FACP, FACR



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Allergy A.R.T.S. (Asthma, Rheumatology Treatment Specialists)

ALLERGY/ASTHMA

Winter Asthma/Allergen Watch

When cold weather sends you inside behind tightly closed doors and windows, concentrated indoor allergens may aggravate allergy and asthma symptoms. It helps to keep your home as clean as possible, and avoid secondhand smoke and other triggering allergens.

You can find out which allergens are at their peak by going to www.allergyarts.com and click-



ing on "Pollen Count." This information also is broadcast daily during the KVII-TV Channel 7 Amarillo local news programs.

DR. SAADEH HONORED AGAIN

Our own Dr. Saadeh has once again been named a Texas Super Doctor by *Texas Monthly* magazine based on results garnered in a survey of the state's doctors and by a Blue Ribbon panel

of peers. The survey focused on the question: "If you as a doctor needed medical care, which doctor would you choose?" Professional achievement was also evaluated.

A good laugh and a long sleep are the best cures in the doctor's book.

Irish Proverb

MEET THE STAFF



Brianne Stewart

Brianne Stewart is an Amarillo woman through and through. The youngest of three girls, she graduated from Amarillo High School and attended Amarillo College.

Prior to coming to Allergy A.R.T.S., Brianne was a customer service representative for Bronz Image.

Brianne's work at the clinic revolves around the allergy shot room, where she is the Immunotherapy Department Supervisor. Her responsibilities include directly supervising the shot room itself and the custom mixing of shot serum, as well as acting as the clinic's OSHA/safety Co-Coordinator.

"The best thing about Allergy A.R.T.S. is the opportunity to work and learn from a very considerate and caring doctor," says Brianne. "We try to maintain a family atmosphere here. Our patients' friendliness and loyalty are an added bonus."

In her spare time, Brianne enjoys softball, movies, attending plays in Dallas and just hanging out with friends.



Delia Rosas

Delia Rosas, a medical assistant and phlebotomist at Allergy A.R.T.S., knows all about how important blood tests are to your health.

A native of Dimmitt, Texas, Delia says her clinic responsibilities include drawing patients' blood, helping with testing, making sure lab results are forwarded for review, and lots and lots of paperwork. Everything she does requires an exceptional attention to details and the commitment to doing a superior job day in and day out. Her patients' health and welfare depend upon it.

Delia joined the Allergy A.R.T.S. staff in 2002. "I really love taking care of the people here and the fact that Dr. Saadeh is a very caring man," she said.

She likes sewing and crafts, but her number one love is her family. "I'm the single mother of four, two boys and two girls," she offered. Two are married, one is about to graduate from Tascosa High School, and the other is still in high school. Even better, Delia has four beautiful grandchildren.

ALLERGIES:

Fallacies & Facts

When more than 40 million people in America suffer from seasonal allergies, there's bound to be a few myths floating around about both causes and cures. Here we address just a few of them and try to share the facts of the matter ...

FALLACY: *You are only allergic to things in the immediate area.*

FACT: Allergens can blow in from miles and miles away, especially in the windy Texas Panhandle. Scientific analysis at West Texas A&M University in Canyon proves that there are allergens in this area from as far away as several hundred miles – and from several directions!

FALLACY: *Moving to a new climate will cure your allergies.*

FACT: It is true that some people find relief for a year or two, but then their immune systems begin to react to the new pollens as exposure increases over time – often leading to an eventual symptom flare-up.

FALLACY: *Allergies like "hay fever" are no big deal.*

FACT: Even relatively mild seasonal allergies can greatly compromise health and quality of life. Sufferers can lose sleep and run a greater risk of developing asthma. They also are more susceptible to upper respiratory infections – like sinusitis, bronchitis or ear infections – and may catch colds more easily.

FALLACY: *You don't need any medication unless symptoms arise.*

FACT: Starting on allergy medications about two weeks before the allergy season begins can prevent symptoms by getting ahead of the immune response.

FALLACY: *Allergy medications are addictive and your body develops a tolerance for them.*

FACT: These medications are absolutely not addictive – and there is no tolerance build-up. Instead, if sufferers find that symptoms no longer respond as well to antihistamines as they once did, your allergies are getting worse. In this case, it is strongly advised that you meet with an allergist like Dr. Saadeh as soon as possible. Special medications and treatments these specialists can provide go a long way toward easing symptoms and improving your life.

RHEUMATOLOGY

Bone Up on Osteoporosis

While it is both debilitating and frustrating, osteoporosis can be prevented and/or treated. Left untreated, however, it puts people at risk of broken bones, pain, deformity and even injury-related death. Osteoporosis is a sleeper, however, in that it often progresses without symptoms until a bone breaks.

Best described as "porous bone," osteoporosis causes low bone density and deterioration of bone tissue, leading to a fragile state in which fractures are more likely to occur. Any bone in the body can be affected, but those most commonly broken involve the spine, hip and wrist.

An estimated 44 million Americans, or 55 percent of people age 50 and over, are thought to be at risk. Approximately 10 million folks already have the disease and nearly 34 million have low bone density, putting them at risk for osteoporosis.

Approximately 80 percent of sufferers are women, but men can get osteoporosis, too. While all ethnic backgrounds are vulnerable, non-Hispanic whites and Asian women have a slightly higher risk for developing the condition. Osteoporosis is basically an older person's disease, but it can strike at any age.

The Costs

The estimated financial cost nationally for direct care (including doctors, hospitals, nursing homes and other services) for osteoporotic fractures is about \$20 billion, and costs keep rising.

Perhaps of more concern is the cost of the quality of life lost by those who suffer this type of fracture. According to the National Osteoporosis Foundation (NOF), one in two women and one in four men over age 50 will have an osteoporosis-related fracture in their lifetime.

Women who suffer a hip fracture are at a four-times greater risk of breaking another hip and greatly reducing their quality of life. Each year there are about 1.5 million osteoporotic fractures, 700,000 of which involve the spine and 300,000 the hip.

Risk Factors

Some people are more likely to develop osteoporosis. They may have one or more of these risk factors:

- Low bone density or mass
- History of fracture after age 50
- Being a woman
- Being thin
- Advanced age
- Estrogen deficiency, especially due to early or surgically induced menopause
- Abnormal absence of menstrual periods
- Family history
- Anorexia nervosa
- Low lifetime calcium intake
- Vitamin D deficiency
- Use of some drugs
- Certain chronic medical conditions
- Low testosterone in men
- Inactive lifestyle
- Smoking
- Excessive alcohol use

Remember, women can lose up to 20 percent of their bone mass in the five to seven years after menopause, thereby upping the risks to develop the disease.

Detection

The good news is that a specialized test known as a "bone mineral density" (BMD) test can measure bone density in various sites on the body. This test is available at Allergy A.R.T.S. and is recommended for most of our patients over age 50, especially women.

The BMD test can:

- Detect osteoporosis before a fracture occurs
- Predict the chances of future breaks
- Determine the rate of bone loss and/or monitor treatment effects when done at regular intervals

Research shows that an increase in BMD testing and follow-up treatment is directly associated with a decrease in the number of hip fractures.

GET AHEAD OF THE GAME: Preventing Osteoporosis

The best defense against developing osteoporosis as we age is by building strong bones during childhood and adolescence. The average woman has acquired 98 percent of her skeletal mass by age 20.

However, recent studies are finding that the more sedentary American lifestyle is producing children with less than optimal bone density. Initial causes point to less exercise as some kids sit in front of computers and televisions during the hours previous generations were outdoors playing or working; decreased intake of calcium (through milk or other sources); and reduced intake of Vitamin D (which is necessary to help calcium build bone), either by a faulty diet or by limited exposure to the sun. (Most computers and televisions are indoors.)

Luckily, it is never too late to improve bone growth. The body is constantly forming new bone cells even as old cells are regularly reabsorbed.

Here are five steps that may help improve bone health and help prevent osteoporosis:

1. Eat a diet rich in calcium and vitamin D
2. Engage in weight-bearing exercise
3. Avoid cigarette smoke and excessive alcohol intake
4. Talk to a healthcare professional about bone health
5. Be tested for bone density as advised and take medication when appropriate

At Allergy A.R.T.S. we believe in helping our patients regain or maintain their health in order to enjoy the most active life possible.

For more information, please see the Web site for the National Osteoporosis Foundation at www.nof.org. ■

Peace and Joy to You this Holiday Season

From all of us here to all of you: May your days be merry and bright, and may the New Year be filled with abundance and good health!

ARTHRITIS SUPPORT

The Amarillo Arthritis & Fibromyalgia Support Group takes a break each winter, with meetings to resume in April on the third Tuesday evening of each month at the Amarillo Northwest Branch Library. In the meantime, eat healthy, reduce stress, get appropriate exercise, rest often and stay positive. For more information and support, contact the Arthritis Foundation at www.arthritis.org, or your rheumatologist.

*Advice is like snow ...
the softer it falls ...
the deeper it sinks into the mind.*

Samuel Taylor Coleridge