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NEWS RELEASE

May is Arthritis Month

The pain of arthritis is the most common cause of disability that people face in their lives. At some time in our lives almost all of us will experience arthritis or have a family member who has this potentially disabling health problem.

In New York State, about 3.7 million people live with arthritis. In 2005 the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), estimated that the number of adult New Yorkers with doctor-diagnosed arthritis will increase by 19 percent by 2030.

Arthritis comprises more than 100 different diseases and conditions affecting joints, the surrounding tissues and other connective tissues. It is characterized by inflammation of the affected areas, causing pain, swelling and limited movement in the joints and connective tissues.

May is Arthritis Awareness Month, when the Otsego County Department of Health reminds everyone that people with arthritis do better if they stay active. At least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity, three or more days a week, can help relieve arthritis pain and stiffness and provide more energy.

The goals of a physical activity program for people with arthritis are to preserve or restore range of motion and flexibility around affected joints, increase muscle strength and endurance, and increase aerobic conditioning.

“Physical activity is essential to improving both physical and mental health and can play a vital role in the management of arthritis. Regular physical activity can keep the muscles around affected joints strong, decrease bone loss and may help control joint swelling and pain,” said the Otsego County Department of Health.

Regular activity replenishes lubrication to the cartilage of the joint and reduces stiffness and pain. When you are active you also help to enhance energy, decrease fatigue and improve sleep. Physical activity can enhance weight loss and promote long-term weight management in those with arthritis who are overweight.

For people with arthritis, low-impact activities at a moderate pace are best. Walking, swimming and biking are particularly good because they will strengthen your heart and help you control your weight if you do them regularly. Everyday activities, such as dancing, gardening and washing the car, are also good. If it has been a while since you have done physical activity, you can do it in 10-minute increments and gradually work your way up to 30 minutes a day.

The most beneficial thing is to choose an activity that moves your large muscle groups, makes you breathe a little harder and makes your heart beat a little faster.

The New York State Department of Health Arthritis Program works with local Arthritis Foundation chapters and others to promote self-management courses.

The Arthritis Foundation Self Help Program is available at locations across New York State. The course is designed to help people learn and practice the different skills needed to build an individualized self-management program, which includes physical activity and healthy nutrition. The six-week Self Help Program consists of weekly two-hour sessions guided by trained instructors.

To learn more about arthritis self-management and the availability of local programs, call the State Health Department’s Arthritis Program at 518-408-5142. Information on arthritis is also available at www.nyhealth.gov.