

# 52 Weeks to Health: Arthritis Awareness Month

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## One in Three Adults in Rural Areas Have Arthritis

As part of the 52 Weeks of Public Health campaign, the Kentucky Department of Public Health (DPH), within the Cabinet for Health and Family Services (CHFS), is highlighting the impact of Arthritis in rural areas. Rural populations in the United States have well documented health disparities, including higher prevalence of chronic health conditions. Doctor-diagnosed Arthritis is one of the most prevalent health conditions in the United States, affecting approximately 54.4 million adults. The impact of arthritis is considerable: an estimated 23.7 million adults have arthritis-attributable activity limitation (AAAL).

A new report just released last week by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) showed that one third of adults in rural areas have Arthritis, and that more than one-half of adults in rural areas are limited in their daily activities by it. In Kentucky, over 1 million adults have doctor diagnosed Arthritis and more than half (570,000) of those with Arthritis live in rural parts of the state. Forty-five percent of rural working age adults report that Arthritis limits their ability to work.

Several evidence-based physical activity and self-management education programs<sup>¶</sup> can help decrease the impact of AAAL by reducing pain and improving function, mood, and quality of life. Many of these programs are offered in small groups, with limited availability in some rural areas.

In Kentucky, the Department for Public Health has collaborated with the Department for Aging and Independent Living with the help of a grant from the CDC to offer evidence-based programs across the state. "Many senior centers, local health departments, the UK Center of Excellence on Rural Health and YMCAs offer proven exercise and self-management programs that help relieve arthritis pain (e.g., Walk with Ease, Enhance Fitness and the Chronic Disease Self-Management Program) according to Teri Wood, PhD, Principal Investigator on the CDC Arthritis grant for the Kentucky Department for Public Health. "Our program is always seeking community organizations already serving rural populations, including churches, county extension agents, veterans' service organizations, health care clinics, and community centers that might be able to collaborate to make the small-group versions of these low-cost programs more available.", said Wood.

The data was analyzed by the Centers for Disease Control's Arthritis Program and published in observance of Arthritis Awareness Month. More information can be found at the following link: [www.cdc.gov/mmwr](http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr).

Throughout the planned 52 Weeks of Public Health promotion, DPH will spotlight a specific public health issue. Additional information about the campaign is available on the DPH website: <http://chfs.ky.gov/dph/default.htm> and will be posted on the CHFS Facebook page: <http://www.facebook.com/kychfs> where Kentuckians are encouraged to like and share posts among their networks of friends.