

# **Jingle Bell, Jingle Bell, Jingle Bell Run For Arthritis All the Way**

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The Jingle Bell Run for Arthritis takes place in Freeport on the first Saturday of November each year. Freeport Podiatry Services, LLC has been one of the sponsors for this event since its first year. We have done this because we feel that the money that goes into the research, education and awareness of arthritis directly affects a significant number of our patients and people of Northwest Illinois. We hope that this event continues for many, many years. This brings us to this month's topic... yes, you guessed it, "Arthritis and Your Feet."

Arthritis basically refers to an inflammation and swelling of the cartilage and lining of the joints. This is usually accompanied by an increase in the amount of fluid in the joints. There are many causes of arthritis from wear and tear (degenerative or osteoarthritis) of the joints, post-traumatic (develops after an injury), rheumatoid arthritis, fibromyalgia (affecting the muscles and soft tissues in addition to the joints), and gout just to name a few of the common types of more than 100 known disorders related to arthritis that are seen by podiatrists.

Arthritis can be disabling and is occasionally a crippling disease that affects around 40 million people in our country alone. The youngest case of juvenile arthritis (affecting those under the age of 18) that we have seen was an 8 year-old girl. The majority of people that we see with arthritis are over the age of 50, however. When arthritis affects the feet it can lead to

decreased mobility, pain, difficulty finding comfortably fitting shoes, joint stiffness, painful corns and callouses, ulcers (breakdown of the skin), painful nodules, a loss of work time or disability and in some cases a loss of one's independence.

## Some of the symptoms that may affect the feet when one has arthritis include:

- **Swelling in the joints, especially the big toe joint, the lesser toe joints, and the ankle;**
- **Pain that recurs in any of the joints;**
- **Redness or increased warmth in any of the joints;**
- **A loss of motion in any of the joints, often seen in the big toe joint and the ankle;**
- **Stiffness in the joints after periods of rest, especially in the morning upon arising;**
- **Changes in the skin, especially a tightness to the skin with or without the formation of a rash, loss of skin lines, and in some cases a lump or bump (growth) that may develop.**

Treatments for arthritis vary depending on the type of arthritis that one may have. Since the foot is such a frequent area of the body that is afflicted your podiatrist may be the first doctor that identifies the condition. Even conditions like bunions, hammer toes, and heel spurs may be an early indication or in some cases a later manifestation of certain types of arthritis. Podiatrists work in conjunction with primary care physicians and rheumatologists in assisting the patient with arthritis and the feet.

Some of the more common treatments of arthritis of the feet and ankles include:

- **Physical therapy and exercise (many of our patients regularly attend water exercise classes)**
- **Special extra-depth shoes or custom-made shoes with accommodative supports (orthotic devices) to balance the foot and provide for adequate room for feet;**
- **Custom-made or prefabricated braces to support the foot and/or ankle in order to allow for assistance when walking;**
- **Surgical correction of the deformities, either to realign the joints or to replace damaged joints when necessary;**
- **Medication which is prescribed for long-term management by the primary care physician or rheumatologist, or for short-term control of the inflammation or pain which can also be prescribed by your podiatrist;**
- **Perhaps most important, patient education, which allows the patient to make informed decisions about their care, their lifestyle, and how to best lead a productive life with the least amount of incapacity possible.**

Remember that your podiatrist is an integral part of your care team when your feet are affected by arthritis. We want you to be able to "jingle all the way" this Holiday Season and for years to come.

*We wish all of you a Happy, Safe  
and Healthy New Year*  
from the doctors and staff of  
**Freeport Podiatry Services, LLC!**