



Accelerating
POSSIBILITIES
& PROMISE
for the Arthritis Community



OUR STRATEGIC DIRECTION FOR 2025 – 2030



The Arthritis Foundation is here to unite and serve the arthritis community today and tomorrow.

The Arthritis Foundation envisions a world where all people with arthritis are living a life without limits.

For more than 75 years, the Foundation has boldly pursued progress toward conquering arthritis in all its forms. Today, we commit to this vision with even deeper intention, stronger determination and greater urgency. With swift action now, we will improve tomorrow for all people affected by arthritis.



Since our founding in 1948, the Arthritis Foundation has been the recognized leader in driving better health outcomes for people with arthritis by being an expert source of arthritis-related information, education and programming. The Foundation continues to be the undisputed champion for state and federal policies and laws that improve the lives of those with arthritis. We fund and lead a bold scientific agenda focused on enhancing quality of life, expanding treatment options and preventing and eradicating arthritis in all its forms.

All of this work is powered through the action of a diverse arthritis community comprised of millions of volunteers, patients, donors, partners and staff members. We know that when we come together, there is no stopping our collective power.

As many celebrated leaders throughout history have noted, “with great power comes great responsibility.” And we take that responsibility seriously as we put patients first in every decision we make and the action we take. We are responsible for the prudent use of time, talent and resources entrusted to our care. We are also responsible for setting our vision — and then securing and driving the resources it will take to achieve it.

In the following pages, you will see the Arthritis Foundation’s strategic direction for the next five years. We have identified six priority areas to accelerate possibilities for today and promise for tomorrow for every person affected by arthritis — patients, caregivers, care partners, allies and adults and children at risk for developing one or more of the many forms of arthritis over their lifetimes.

In considering our strategic direction for the next five years, it was important that we engage community members at various stages of its development. We’re grateful to the hundreds of volunteers, partners and staff members who have helped us dream big, articulate what matters most and refine our priorities while also reflecting our sense of both urgency and optimism.

That urgency and optimism is what drives me, our Board of Directors and every member of the Foundation’s team of volunteers and staff. We are proud that our strategic direction links the Foundation’s past achievements to possibilities of the present — and a brighter future for all who live with arthritis.

I hope you will join with us in making this possibility and promise a reality for the nearly 60 million adults and children in the United States affected by arthritis.

“The public’s misconception of arthritis has always been one of our great challenges. We must change it.”

Steven Taylor
President & Chief Executive Officer
Arthritis Foundation

Accelerating

POSSIBILITIES & PROMISE

for the Arthritis Community

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Cross-cutting aims central to the Arthritis Foundation's mission and mandate: improving overall well-being, overcoming pain and fostering a welcoming and inclusive community

— More possibilities for
TODAY



IMPROVE

Living with arthritis can be tough, but you don't have to face it alone. The Arthritis Foundation is here to provide support, resources and connections to help make the most of every day. With practical information and diverse programs designed to meet the needs of people of all ages facing various challenges with different forms of arthritis, you're never more than a call, click or login away from experts who understand and want to help. The camaraderie built through shared experiences is a powerful benefit of joining our online and in-person gatherings.



“It's all about community. We're here, and we're in it together to help each other. We create opportunities that bring people together.”

– Arthritis Patient & Volunteer

“The Arthritis Foundation explains world-class research and medical advice in terms people can use. It's the only way to break through the information overload.”

– National Volunteer Board Member

Together, we will **improve quality of life for people with arthritis** through these actions:

Educate and empower

Equip people diagnosed with or at risk for arthritis with relatable resources and education that they can use today.

Foster connection

Provide spaces for people affected by arthritis to support, learn from and share with others who understand similar challenges.

Promote healthy living

Deliver programs that enhance the physical, emotional and social well-being of people of diverse backgrounds at any age, stage of life and place along their journey with arthritis.

Advance models for ideal care

Advocate for patient-centered, holistic health care that better addresses patients' needs and expectations and improves their care experiences.

The Arthritis Foundation is working to **improve the quality of life for people with arthritis** through these and other programs:

Connect Groups are hosted virtually and in person for social and supportive educational events and activities. Groups are organized by a wide range of interests and affiliations, and they offer a place of understanding and encouragement for people with arthritis and their loved ones.

JA Camps around the country provide children and teens with a fun, safe and secure place to make lifelong friends, gain greater understanding of juvenile arthritis (JA) and other childhood rheumatic diseases and increase independence and self-confidence.

Educational webinar programs make it easy to hear from experts on a wide range of topics, from pain management to nutrition, emotional wellbeing and the latest research.

AMPLIFY

Arthritis is a public health crisis. With nearly 60 million people in the U.S. diagnosed with a form of arthritis, we must improve the public perception of arthritis, who it affects and how it can destroy quality of life. The Arthritis Foundation will continue to be the leader in providing information, education and connections for people living with arthritis and those who care about them. And we must continue to broadcast the devastating effects of arthritis on our communities and workplaces to ensure that employers, policymakers and government agencies join with us in our mission to improve the lives of those with arthritis.



“We must improve awareness of arthritis and what is being done to support those affected. We must ensure people understand that arthritis affects all ages. It’s not your grandma’s arthritis.”

– Parent of a Juvenile Arthritis Patient

“ Finding ways to reach people early in their diagnosis, to let them know the Arthritis Foundation exists for them, is crucial. If you can get people engaged early, you show them the benefit of our community.”

– National Patient Education Volunteer

Together, we will **amplify understanding of arthritis and Arthritis Foundation resources** through these actions:

Dispel myths that contribute to stigma about arthritis

Counter beliefs that arthritis is simply an inevitable part of aging — a message that can delay diagnosis, hinder access to treatment and prevention, fray social support and undermine well-being and mental health.

Broaden awareness about arthritis, its many forms and its effects on adults and children

Inform the general public and health care professionals about the signs, symptoms and life impacts of arthritis to identify and address it sooner and more effectively.

Reinforce the magnitude and urgency of arthritis as a major public health crisis

Alert health systems, funders and policymakers about population trends and the alarming number of people affected by arthritis, already the number one cause of disability in the U.S.

Leverage the Arthritis Foundation's expertise to address the barriers that arthritis creates

Broadcast the Foundation's deep well of community resources and programs, our dynamic action plan to deliver patient-prioritized change and our ambitious vision for a future of limitless potential for all affected by arthritis.

The Arthritis Foundation is working to **amplify understanding of arthritis and Arthritis Foundation resources** through these and other programs:

We {Journey} Together is a public awareness campaign the Foundation promotes each year, including during Arthritis Awareness Month in May and JA Awareness Month in July. It's aimed at adults and children with arthritis, especially recently diagnosed patients, to help them connect, learn and grow with programs and resources available from the Foundation.

Arthritis.org is the world's most comprehensive source of credible, evidence-based information about the many forms of arthritis. It serves millions of visitors' information needs each year, and the Foundation will continue investing in adding new content and resources in various formats and employing technology tools to help people find materials, news and opportunities they seek.



STRENGTHEN

At the heart of the Arthritis Foundation's mission is a team of fiercely committed volunteers and staff who strives to change lives and create a better world for future generations. Their ability to reach and positively impact millions of people affected by arthritis depends on exceptional leadership, effective execution and sustainable funding scaled to meet the community's needs.

“The adaptability of the Foundation is a strength. We have evolved, and I am excited about the future.”

– National Board Member

“ I see things move forward because of my efforts. It's important for a volunteer-powered organization to make sure volunteers know their contributions matter.”

– Arthritis Foundation Volunteer

Together, we will **strengthen organizational excellence to broaden the Foundation's impact** through these actions:

Cultivate and invest in a high-caliber team

Attract, retain and develop dedicated and diverse volunteers and staff whose individual talents support a collaborative culture.

Diversify sources of financial support

Inspire funding for the Foundation's mission through an array of charitable and strategic partnership opportunities.

Harness technology

Employ best practices for using tools like customer relationship management software and artificial intelligence to streamline operations and enhance communications capabilities.

Expect and recognize outstanding performance

Achieve best-in-class standards for managing all areas of the Foundation and spotlight exceptional contributions made by volunteers and staff.

The Arthritis Foundation is working to **strengthen organizational excellence to broaden the Foundation's impact** through these and other programs:

Signature events like the Walk to Cure Arthritis, Jingle Bell Run, Arthritis Foundation Cycling Experience, galas and gatherings are much more than opportunities to raise awareness and funds to fuel the Foundation's mission; they're vibrant occasions to make and renew community connections with people who get what it's like to live with arthritis. They're also a great way to become involved with the Foundation's mission and gain or flex skills and interests by volunteering.

Individual giving represents the greatest source of support for the Foundation's vital mission. Whether you're giving back or paying it forward, monthly donations, one-time gifts, planned gifts and tribute gifts of any size are all ways to participate in creating more possibilities for today and promise for a brighter tomorrow.

CORE COMMITMENTS

In conversations, surveys and background research conducted to set our strategic direction, community members elevated three cross-cutting topics that are central to the Arthritis Foundation's mission and mandate: improving overall well-being, overcoming pain and fostering a welcoming and inclusive community. These are enduring aims of the Arthritis Foundation that extend beyond 2030, and we keep them at the forefront of our every action. Over the next three pages, we briefly describe how we view each one and highlight our ongoing commitments.



Acknowledging Physical and Emotional Health as Key to Well-being

Arthritis affects the whole person — body, mind and spirit. People living with arthritis know this firsthand, and there is a growing body of research aimed at better understanding the mind-body connection, including findings like these:

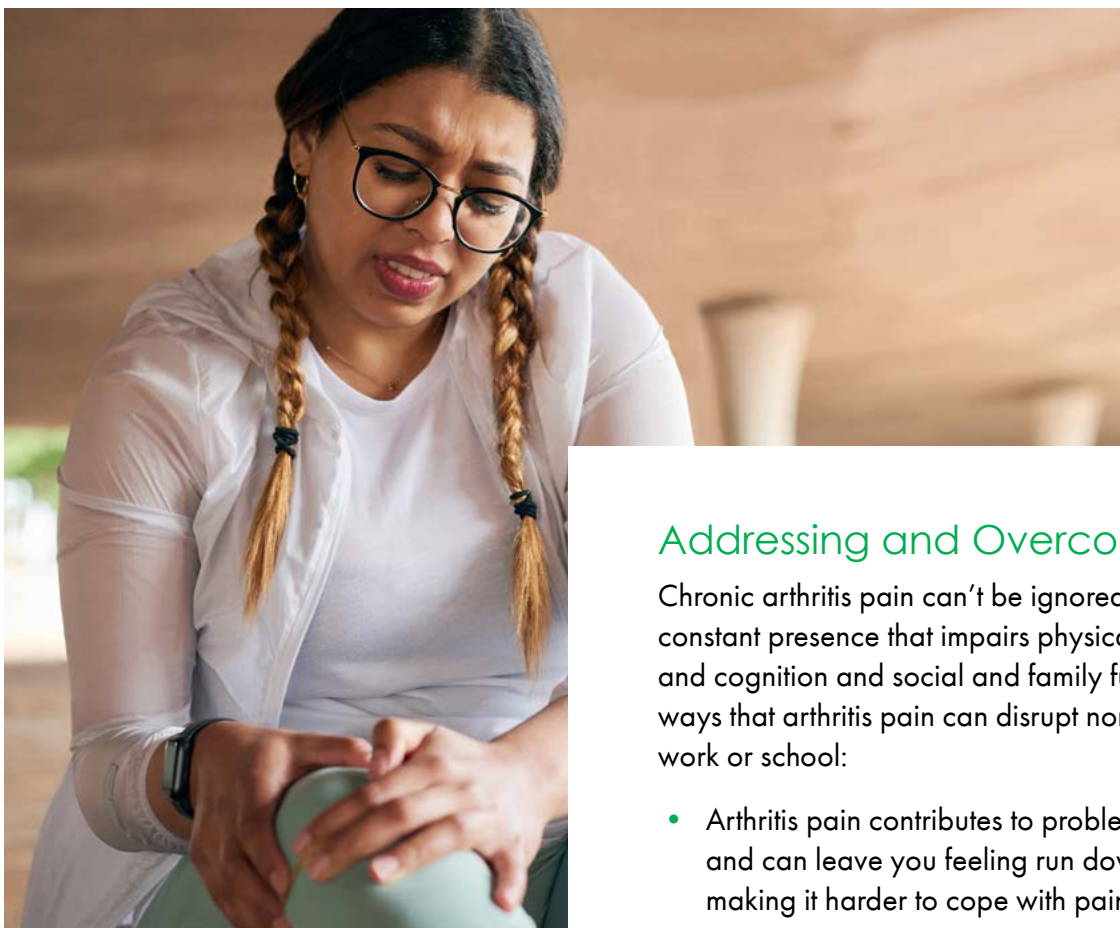
- Living with daily symptoms like pain, stiffness and tenderness is physically and emotionally stressful. Chronic stress is known to change levels of brain and nervous system chemicals that can affect mood, thought processes and behavior. Disrupting the body's balance of these chemicals can bring on or worsen depression in some people.
- Inflammation may play a role in causing or intensifying both pain and depression.
- Depression can make pain and other physical symptoms worse. It weakens a person's ability to deal and cope with discomfort and limitations and can affect how they perceive their physical condition and life circumstances.
- Anxiety can be heightened when dealing with health and lifestyle changes that can occur with arthritis. Anxiety and depression may lead to exercising less, becoming less social and more isolated and having worse sleep quality.

All these effects can increase pain and dampen overall mood, leading to a spiral of worsening blues, deepening depression and more intense pain. The link is real and can be life-altering. Living the fullest life possible requires attending to the physical aspects of arthritis and accompanying feelings of anxiety, depressed mood, stress, grief and anger.

We are fully dedicated to expanding resources, education, advocacy and research programs to foster solutions that benefit the whole person.

“Calls to the Helpline about mental well-being have greatly increased.”

– Helpline Staff Member



“ At the Arthritis Foundation, we have an amazing team of passionate staff and volunteers who care about those who live with the pain of arthritis and want to help.”

– National Volunteer Board Chair

Addressing and Overcoming Pain

Chronic arthritis pain can't be ignored. It is an intense and constant presence that impairs physical functioning, thinking and cognition and social and family functioning. Here are some ways that arthritis pain can disrupt normal activities at home, work or school:

- Arthritis pain contributes to problems getting restful sleep and can leave you feeling run down and exhausted, making it harder to cope with pain and fulfill daily activities.
- Pain and its consequences can make it hard to pay attention, learn, retain information, keep up with schoolwork and meet job expectations. This may affect self-worth, identity and educational or professional attainment.
- The pain of arthritis may cause individuals to cut back or give up cherished hobbies and other things they love to do, leading to disappointment and reduced quality of life.
- The worse the level of pain an individual experiences, the more it interferes with physical function and social roles and the greater the impact on their life overall.

We are committed to addressing pain through science-based initiatives to better understand, treat and control pain. We will continue to advocate for access to high-quality, patient-centered care and deliver programs that connect, inform and educate community members, empowering every person with strategies and support to live a life without limits.



Affirming Our Steadfast Commitment to Inclusion and Impact

The Arthritis Foundation empowers all people with arthritis to live their best life. We fight for a better quality of life for every person. We embrace diversity, equity and inclusion for all communities without bias or barriers based on age, gender identity, race, sexual orientation, physical or mental ability, ethnicity, economic condition or religious affiliation.

- We welcome unique perspectives and experiences to advance our mission and progress our fight for access to quality health care for every person.
- We value the unique qualities and experiences of all individuals, and we're passionate about expanding our practice of creating an inclusive environment that promotes and values diversity.
- We believe that everyone who cares about our cause — every donor, volunteer, advocate, patient and member of our staff — should have equal access to our programs, services, initiatives and opportunities.
- We commit to embracing a diverse and inclusive community that represents, reflects and values the unique characteristics, experiences and viewpoints of our volunteers, donors, staff members, partners and the communities we serve.

Together, we champion a diverse and inclusive culture that encourages, supports and celebrates the voices and perspectives of all.

“Everyone belongs at the Arthritis Foundation. We advocate for the best interests of all patients and their families.”

– Local Leadership Board Chair



— Promise for a brighter

TOMORROW





DISCOVER

To many people with arthritis, research represents hope. That's why the high-priority need for better treatments for all types of arthritis drives the Foundation's multi-pronged research agenda. Our team works closely with renowned experts from top medical, academic, nonprofit and government research institutions to identify scientific opportunities ripe for investment, foster consensus and spur innovation. We also work to attract young clinicians and researchers from diverse backgrounds and disciplines to be the arthritis experts of tomorrow.

“The osteoarthritis PIKASO program is big and bold. It could have a real impact for the future.”

– Osteoarthritis Research Partner

“ We’re working on new treatments for tomorrow while helping people manage and cope with arthritis today.”

– Medical & Scientific Committee Member

Together, we will **discover scientific insights that lead to improved treatments and prevention** through these actions:

Spearhead novel research

Identify, fund and report the most promising basic, clinical and translational research to catalyze new discoveries and develop innovative ways to better detect, treat and prevent arthritis.

Enhance research tools

Support and steward collections of laboratory, clinical and patient-reported data and biospecimens to better understand all facets of arthritis.

Convene scientific thought leaders

Leverage the Foundation’s prominence and subject matter expertise to spark creativity, build consensus and fuel teamwork among researchers.

Engage and energize the next generation

Foster a deep understanding of arthritis in all its forms, commitment to the field and increased diversity in early-career researchers and health care professionals.

The Arthritis Foundation is working to **discover scientific insights that lead to improved treatments and prevention** through these and other programs:

Preventing Injured Knees from osteoArthritis Severity Outcomes (PIKASO) is an innovative, collaborative clinical trial testing whether metformin, a drug used to manage Type 2 diabetes, can prevent or delay osteoarthritis progression in people at higher risk for developing post-traumatic osteoarthritis. PIKASO is also the most significant science initiative led by the Arthritis Foundation and represents a model for investments in other network-based studies.

Targeted Requests for Proposals are issued by the Foundation on various forms of arthritis throughout the year to invite researchers to apply for funding to support studies that will advance the field and contribute to better care and treatment options for people with arthritis.

Rheumatology Fellowships support the training of early-career researchers and health care professionals committed to providing rheumatology care to in-need patient populations. With rising demand for rheumatologists, especially specialists who understand the needs of underserved communities, this investment helps to close a shortage many in our community have experienced.

TRANSFORM

For scientific and medical advances to reach and improve individuals' lives, advocacy often must smooth the path. Powered by a network of volunteer Arthritis Advocates and Ambassadors, the Foundation leads nationwide initiatives to break down barriers to care, expand funding for crucial arthritis programs and ensure the health care system is prepared to deliver advances in how arthritis is detected, diagnosed and treated. We also inform and prepare individuals to be their own best advocates and to share their experiences with policymakers and the media.



“We have a stellar advocacy program. Of all the things the Foundation does, it seems to be what delivers the greatest return on investment.”

– National Volunteer Board Vice Chair

“Investing more in research while also advancing arthritis legislation and regulations will help people manage their arthritis.”

– National Research Volunteer

Together, we will **transform health care policy and systems to better support arthritis care and research** through these actions:

Shape and advance the adoption of policies that make arthritis treatment more accessible and affordable

Encourage federal and state policymakers to reduce out-of-pocket costs, reform step therapy and remove other barriers that make it harder for patients to obtain appropriate care.

Translate the increasing toll of arthritis into imperatives for funding and action

Advocate for arthritis research and program funding that matches the magnitude of the public health crisis it poses.

Activate more community members to serve as change agents

Channel personal experiences into empowering fuel that ignites policy reform, model programs and increased funding.

Expedite the adoption of innovation

Secure system and policy changes needed to advance research, clinical care and better outcomes.

The Arthritis Foundation is working to **transform health care policy and systems to better support arthritis care and research** through these and other programs:

The Arthritis Foundation's Advocacy Summit convenes advocates from around the country in Washington, D.C., to share their arthritis stories with members of Congress, helping these lawmakers better understand how they can champion policies and programs that truly make a difference in people's lives. This is the centerpiece event of our dynamic, year-round advocacy program.

Rx for Access provides web-based information and tools to help individuals address access challenges they may experience. Materials are updated to reflect changing federal and state policies and include checklists and templates for navigating health care coverage, contesting coverage denials, finding financial assistance programs and helping advocate for the best possible care.

BOLSTER

The number of adults and children diagnosed with arthritis in the U.S. alone is huge — nearly 60 million — and their needs are urgent and diverse. That’s why the Arthritis Foundation must build on our track record for establishing and fostering collaborative approaches to problem-solving. We also have the opportunity to share what we’ve learned and benefit from other organizations’ and communities’ insights and experiences to increase the visibility of arthritis and advance our mission.



“The Arthritis Foundation can’t do it alone. We need to partner with other organizations.”

– Advocacy Volunteer

“As the leading cause of disability, arthritis is a major workforce-related cost. The Foundation’s employer resources help us support our employees with arthritis.”

– Corporate Partner

Together, we will **bolster alliances and partnerships to tackle shared challenges and priorities** through these actions:

Extend the Foundation’s reach

Strengthen partnerships with corporate and consumer brands, employers and the health care community to support the mission of the Arthritis Foundation.

Generate mutual value

Develop strategic relationships with companies and organizations to better meet the needs of people affected by arthritis.

Enact change on broad-based initiatives that improve quality of life

Participate in coalitions addressing cross-cutting policy issues, such as greater investment in research and public health.

Contribute thought leadership and gain new insights

Raise the profile of arthritis and draw inspiration from active involvement with alliances and partners that address shared challenges, such as achieving health equity and filling gaps in the health care workforce.

The Arthritis Foundation is working to **bolster alliances and partnerships to tackle shared challenges and priorities** through these and other programs:

Arthritis@Work assists employers with a win-win way to support the millions of people managing a job while also living with arthritis, providing free turnkey tools and resources. It also focuses on helping reduce the 172 million lost workdays and \$304 billion in medical costs and lost earnings due to arthritis each year.

The Ease of Use Certified® program inspires accessible design of products and packaging to help make tasks for people with arthritis and chronic pain easier. Design Guides and a detailed evaluation and certification process support the Foundation’s partnership with companies to lead the way in bringing innovative, easy-to-use products to the arthritis community.

Equipping more health care professionals to deliver high-quality arthritis care requires a multi-organization approach to reach specialists, primary care practitioners and allied health professionals. The Foundation is expanding partnerships to conduct professional education, aid providers in addressing access issues, broaden participation in research studies and clinical trials and generate and update care guidelines.

More possibilities for **TODAY**

Promise for a brighter **TOMORROW**



“ We are here to unite and serve the arthritis community. We give people hope.”

– Arthritis Foundation CEO

“ If we could bottle the magic that happens when we connect people for the first time, that is when they say, ‘Now I get it.’ ”

– Arthritis Patient & Volunteer



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to the hundreds of patients, volunteers, partners and staff members who helped discern and describe the community's needs, expectations and ambitions for the future. Thank you to our Board of Directors for active engagement in developing and championing this Strategic Direction for 2025–2030.

Thank you to the Kith Collective, LLC for strategic counsel, engaging with our community and articulating the plan.

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arthritis.org

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Science partnerships and collaborations

arthritis.org/researchpartnerships



We envision a
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