

# Helping People with Osteoarthritis Thrive: Implementing the Walk With Ease Program

The Arthritis Foundation's *Walk With Ease* program is an evidence-based program that reduces the pain of arthritis and improves overall health. Whether a person with osteoarthritis (OA) needs relief from pain or just wants to be more active, *Walk With Ease* can help. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has approved *Walk With Ease* as an arthritis intervention that helps participants learn how to incorporate physical activity into their everyday lives, safely and effectively. Studies show that *Walk With Ease*:<sup>1</sup>

- Reduces the pain and discomfort of arthritis
- Increases balance, strength and walking pace
- Builds participants' confidence in the ability to be physically active
- Improves overall health



## The Program

*Walk with Ease* can be delivered over a six-week period in one of two formats: instructor-led group OR individual self-directed. Both formats include a step-by-step workbook with:

- Motivational tools
- Strategies to set and monitor realistic goals for improving fitness
- Tips for arthritis symptom management
- Appropriate stretching and strengthening exercises to protect joints and minimize pain

*Camine Con Gusto* is the Spanish language version of *Walk with Ease* and is only available in the self-directed format. A community trial testing *Camine Con Gusto* showed improvement in self-reported outcomes in Hispanics comparable to those found in non-Hispanic white and black individuals with self-reported arthritis.<sup>2</sup>

## ***Walk With Ease* Is an Affordable and Effective Option for Your Community**

*Walk With Ease* is low-cost and can be integrated into an existing wellness program, or it can provide the foundation for a new wellness program. Local aging services providers, senior centers, adult education programs, parks and recreation, employers, health departments and faith-based organizations are well-positioned to provide *Walk With Ease* within their communities.

*"My Walk With Ease buddy encouraged me to go because I was having a little trouble with my back. She thought that walking would be good for it, and it really turned out to be true. She's been a great inspiration."*

- *Walk With Ease Participant*

**Getting Started:** To find out if there are already classes in your area:

- Contact your local Arthritis Foundation office:
  - [www.arthritis.org/local-offices](http://www.arthritis.org/local-offices)
  - 800-283-7800
- Search the AF Resource Finder <http://resourcefinder.arthritis.org/>

A *Walk With Ease* Program Leader is required to offer the group format. Program Leaders must complete a half-day online training and be certified in CPR. Information about the training and training costs is available at: [www.afa.com/courses/arthritis-foundation-walk-with-ease](http://www.afa.com/courses/arthritis-foundation-walk-with-ease). Leaders receive an Arthritis Foundation certification, a Leader's manual with exercise illustrations, health education information, and a 6-week walking plan. Sites offering the Leader-led WWE format are required to have liability insurance, as well as a classroom, and a safe walking area.



### **In-Person Community Format**

WWE Leader-led classes are currently taught in cities all over the country. The recommended class size is 12-15 participants, but may be up to 25 participants if there are co-leaders. Classes meet three times a week for one hour and include short informational presentations, group discussion, and walking.

### **Self-Guided Format**

The Self-Guided format is available in English and in Spanish. A recommended schedule of readings and activities is provided in the Workbook. If your organization prefers to offer this format, you can purchase, or you can have enrollees purchase, the Workbook at the Arthritis Foundation Online Store: [www.afstore.org/site/index-afstore.html](http://www.afstore.org/site/index-afstore.html).

### **Tools, Mobile App, Videos and Materials**

WWE Online Tools are available at [www.arthritis.org/living-with-arthritis/tools-resources/walk-with-ease/online-tool/](http://www.arthritis.org/living-with-arthritis/tools-resources/walk-with-ease/online-tool/). Other WWE program materials, including those for *Camine Con Gusto*, are available at: <http://www.afstore.org> and at [www.arthritis.org/living-with-arthritis/tools-resources/walk-with-ease/](http://www.arthritis.org/living-with-arthritis/tools-resources/walk-with-ease/).

## **Know the Facts**

More than **27 million adults** of all ages, races, and ethnicities have Osteoarthritis (OA).

OA is:

- The most common form of arthritis
- **A leading cause of disability**
- An under-recognized public health crisis.
- Increasing dramatically, due to two important OA risk factors: ① the aging of 78.2 million Baby Boomers, ② the obesity epidemic.

Although no cures for OA exist, there are effective treatments for disease management, including:

- 1) Weight management
- 2) Injury prevention to prevent the onset
- 3) **Physical activity and self-management education for those with OA to improve symptom management and physical function.**<sup>3</sup>

#### References

1. Callahan, L., Shreffler, J., Altpeter, M., Schoster, B., Hootman, J., Houenou, L., Martin, K., & Schwartz, T. (2011). Evaluation of Group and Self-Directed Formats of the Arthritis Foundation's (AF) Walk with Ease (WWE) Program, *Arthritis Care & Research*, 63(8): 1098–1107. doi: 10.1002/acr.20490.
2. Callahan, L.F., Rivadeneira, A., Altpeter, M., Vilen, L., Hackney, B., Cleveland, R.J., Sepulveda, V., Reuland, D., & Rojas, C. (2016). Evaluation of the Arthritis Foundation's *Camine Con Gusto* Program for Hispanic Adults with Arthritis in North Carolina. *Hispanic Health Care International*, 14(3), 132-140. DOI: 10.1177/1540415316665202
3. Lubar D, White PH, Callahan LF, Chang RW, Helmick CG, Lappin DR, et al. A National Public Health Agenda for Osteoarthritis 2010. *Semin Arthritis Rheum* 2010;39(5):323-6.