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Media Contact:

Christine Weiss

(o) 801-538-9458 (m) 801) 471-8073

Leslie Nelson

Utah Arthritis Foundation

(o) 801-536-0990 (m) 801-918-6262

News Release

World Arthritis Day: Move to Improve!

Simple walking can lessen symptoms, reduce pain

(Salt Lake City) – In 2009, one in every three (34.8%) Utah adults with arthritis was obese. That’s a 16% increase from the 29.9% reported in 2003. According to a report released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, obesity prevalence nationwide is 54% higher among adults with arthritis compared to adults without the condition.

“This is an ongoing concern for us,” said Rebecca Castleton, Utah Department of Health (UDOH) Arthritis Program Coordinator. “Arthritis is the number one cause of disability in Utah and physical activity is an essential way to manage symptoms and maintain a healthy weight.”

Utah Department of Health (UDOH) data show that, of the more than 415,000 Utah adults diagnosed with arthritis, more than 57,000 (13.8%) report they do no moderate or vigorous physical activity. With that in mind, the theme for World Arthritis Day, October 12, 2012, is ‘Move to Improve’.

Although exercise and lifestyle self-management are critical to reducing the health impact of arthritis, losing weight can be a complex battle due to joint pain and stiffness that can limit physical activity.

“People with arthritis may have a more difficult time losing weight and exercising, but those are the two best things they can do to improve their symptoms,” said Castleton.

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Simple walking can reduce pain, improve function, and promote weight loss. A loss of just 10-12 pounds can make a big difference in quality of life and postpone further disability. The combination of physical activity and weight loss can reduce the number of knee replacements and help people with arthritis live longer. It can also help people manage other chronic conditions like heart disease, diabetes, and hypertension.

The CDC recommends moderate-intensity, low-impact activities like walking, dancing, biking, swimming, and water aerobics. Current physical activity recommendations for adults are 150 minutes per week, or 30 minutes per day at least 3 days per week (2.5 hours per week). “If 30 minutes seems too overwhelming, activity can be broken up into 10-15 minute sessions and spread throughout the day” suggests Castleton.

The CDC endorses programs like the Arthritis Foundation’s Exercise Program, Stanford’s Chronic Disease Self-Management Program, and others such as Enhance Fitness and Walk With Ease to support people with arthritis in self-managing and increasing their physical activity. With new funding from the CDC, the Utah Department of Health will help even more individuals in Utah access these programs in community settings throughout the state.

For more information, or to learn more about free exercise and other arthritis classes in your area, visit www.health.utah.gov/arthritis or call 801-538-9458. Or contact the Arthritis Foundation at 1-800-444-4993 or <http://www.arthritis.org/chapters/utah/>.

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