

MEDIA RELEASE



**ARTHRITIS
NEW ZEALAND**

KAIPONAPONA AOTEAROA

Our Vision: Improving the life of every person affected by arthritis

Ko tō mātou aronga: Kia whakapiki i te oranga o te hūnga kua pāngia e te matē kaiponapona

Thursday January 25, 2018

Arthritis numbers rise

More New Zealanders than ever are living with arthritis – around 647,000 adults.

Latest Ministry of Health figures show 17 percent of adults have arthritis, up from 15 percent in 2011/12. Half of adults aged over 75 have the condition, which often leads to chronic pain and is a major cause of disability for older people.

“We see the impact of arthritis daily, in the numbers of people looking for advice and support through our services,” Arthritis New Zealand’s CEO, Philip Kearney said.

Mr Kearney said the figures show a trend which is only going to place more of a burden on the health system and the economy as the population ages. Arthritis already costs New Zealand an estimated \$3.2 billion every year.

“Aside from the older population, almost half the people with arthritis are of working age, so it has a huge effect on families’ livelihoods, not to mention New Zealand’s productivity as a whole. Part of our work is encouraging employers and ACC to reduce some of the barriers to paid employment for people with arthritis,” he said.

Arthritis comes in many forms and can affect people of any age. The most common is osteoarthritis, which affects 10 percent of adults (about 386,000), followed by gout (110,000 adults) and rheumatoid arthritis (109,000 adults).

Arthritis New Zealand encourages people to stay mobile, reduce weight and eat a healthy diet to reduce the impact of arthritis as they age. The charity, which relies on community fundraising for most of its income, also advocates for better access to rheumatology services and arthritis medications, accessible packaging, and early treatment of gout.

ENDS

Data available from: New Zealand Health Survey, Annual Data Explorer, December 2017, Ministry of Health.

...2/



Arthritis New Zealand aims to improve the life of every person affected by arthritis. We are a national not-for-profit organisation focused on raising awareness, advocating for those with arthritis and providing advice and support. For more information, phone the helpline 0800 663 463, find us on Facebook or visit www.arthritis.org.nz

For more information please contact:

Joanne Taylor
Communications Coordinator
Arthritis New Zealand
DDI 09 523 8903
Email: joanne.taylor@arthritis.org.nz

Philip Kearney
Chief Executive
Arthritis New Zealand
DDI 04 472 5641
Mobile 027 419 8946
Email: Philip.kearney@arthritis.org.nz