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ARTHRITIS BURDEN SOARING, EXPERTS SAY *Action Needed Now to Limit Impact, Arthritis Foundation Warns*

ATLANTA, Jan. 2, 2008 – Arthritis is exploding in an aging population of U.S. baby boomers and is projected to increase by 40% in the next two decades, according to a new study released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for the National Arthritis Data Workgroup. The report reaffirms that nearly one in five U.S. adults (46 million people) have arthritis and an estimated 67 million people will be affected by 2030.

The study, published in the January issue of *Arthritis & Rheumatism*, found that osteoarthritis, the most common form of arthritis, has increased to 27 million people, up from 1990 estimates of 21 million. Other key findings include an increase in gout (3 million adults, up from 2.1 million) and a decrease in rheumatoid arthritis (down from 2.1 million adults to 1.3 million). The study also estimates that 294,000 U.S. children and teenagers under age 18 (or one in 250 children) have been diagnosed with arthritis or another rheumatologic condition.

“The prevalence of arthritis overall continues to grow in the United States, which is not surprising given that many of the specific conditions are age related and the general population is aging,” said Charles G. Helmick, MD, a CDC epidemiologist and a lead author on the study. “Increases in some of the more common types of arthritis suggest a growing impact on the health care and public health systems,” he said.

According to the Arthritis Foundation, the news isn’t good for the nation’s baby boomers or the economy. Already the most common cause of disability in the U.S., arthritis limits activity for 19 million of the 46 million U.S. adults with the disease. It also exacts a hefty financial toll on the country -- \$128 billion annually.

“Even as the number of people with arthritis rises, the level of federal funding for arthritis research has declined in today’s dollar and intervention programs that could limit the impact are being underutilized,” said John H. Klippel, MD, president and CEO, Arthritis Foundation. “We must reverse this trend to avoid a potential public health crisis.”

The Arthritis Foundation is working to help address this ever-growing problem. The Arthritis Prevention, Control, and Cure Act (S. 626/H.R. 1283) proposes to strengthen arthritis public health initiatives, which would ensure that more people are diagnosed early and avoid pain and permanent disability. In addition, the Arthritis Foundation urges the public to take part in effective interventions and programs that could reduce the impact. These include getting educated about managing your arthritis through the Arthritis Foundation Self-Help Program, and getting more physically active through the Arthritis Foundation Exercise or Aquatics Programs.

“We urge the American people to contact their area Arthritis Foundation for more information on arthritis programs and to find out how they can support the Arthritis Prevention, Control and Cure Act by asking Congress to enact this critical legislation this year,” Klippel said.

For adults and children living with arthritis, the Arthritis Foundation offers resources for managing the disease, including:

- Patient education materials including free brochures and booklets
- Community-based health education and exercise programs including *Arthritis Foundation Aquatic Program*, *Arthritis Foundation Exercise Program* and *Arthritis Foundation Self-Help Program*
- The national, bimonthly consumer magazine, *Arthritis Today*

For information about Arthritis Foundation programs in your area or for a complimentary copy of the Arthritis Foundation’s “Arthritis Answers” brochure, which includes information on preventing and controlling arthritis, along with tips on making daily activities easier on your joints, visit the Arthritis Foundation at www.arthritis.org

About the Arthritis Foundation

The Arthritis Foundation is the leading health organization addressing the needs of some 46 million Americans living with arthritis, the nation’s most common cause of disability. Founded in 1948, with headquarters in Atlanta, the Arthritis Foundation has multiple service points located throughout the country.

The Arthritis Foundation is the largest private, not-for-profit contributor to arthritis research in the world, funding more than \$380 million in research grants since 1948. Celebrating its 60th anniversary this year, the foundation helps individuals take control of arthritis by providing public health education; pursuing public policy and legislation; and conducting evidence-based programs to improve the quality of life for those living with arthritis. Information is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week at 1-800-283-7800 or www.arthritis.org.