



**Medical
Blueprints**

YOUNG AND ARTHRITIC

BACKGROUND: According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the word "arthritis" actually means joint inflammation. It is a label for more than 100 rheumatic diseases and conditions that affect joints, the tissues that surround joints and other connective tissue. Typically, rheumatic conditions are characterized by pain and stiffness in and around one or more joints. The symptoms can develop gradually or suddenly. Certain rheumatic conditions can also involve the immune system and other internal organs of the body.

NOT JUST A PROBLEM FOR THE OLD: When you think of arthritis, you probably think of it affecting mostly older individuals. However, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, about 300,000 children have been diagnosed with arthritis. Doctors believe there are thousands of unreported cases as well. Children and young adults may be less able to describe their symptoms, which may lead to a delayed diagnosis. Parents may attribute the symptoms to "growing pains." However, an early diagnosis may be important in preventing joint damage and the deterioration of cartilage.

SECONDARY ARTHRITIS: Timothy Kremchek, M.D., an orthopedic surgeon from Beacon Orthopaedics and Sports Medicine in Cincinnati, says he is seeing more cases of "secondary arthritis" in young people. This type of arthritis can develop after an injury or a surgical procedure. According to the University of Michigan Health System, nearly 70 percent of ACL injuries in young athletes will lead to an early onset of osteoarthritis. Each year, about one out of 3,000 people will suffer an ACL injury. While the injury is most common among children and teens, young female athletes are at greatest risk. Doctors typically treat secondary arthritis with physical therapy, injections and a surgical procedure called arthroscopy. They say they try to avoid performing joint replacement surgery on patients so young.