

# An Ounce of Prevention is Worth a Pound of Cure: Osteoarthritis and Rural Youth

## Common Youth Risk Factors

Agriculture is one of the most hazardous industries in the nation, and yet it has more youth involved in the physical day-to-day jobs than any other industry (USDA, Ag Census, 2012).

Nearly 900,000 youth are working on farms in some capacity (USDA, Ag Census, 2012).

If the average age of our US adult farmer is approaching 58 years old, and over 1/3 of those adult farmers have some form of arthritis, how are our farm youth being utilized on the farms to compensate for these facts?



## Osteoarthritis in Youth- Strategies for Prevention

PHYSICAL CAPABILITIES + BODY LIMITATIONS + WORK TASKS + TOOLS AVAILABLE + ENVIRONMENT = ERGONOMICS



Find the best fit between the youth worker and the job- ensure that they are uninjured, safe, comfortable, and productive.

## Common Causes of OA in Youth

Many youth ag workers don't know that they are at risk.

OA is not a normal part of aging, and it can occur much earlier in a youth's life if their daily tasks are repetitive, forceful, or extreme.

- Sports/Work Injuries
- Unbalanced Diet/Weight
- Stress
- Genetics
- Age
- Job Hazards

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EDUCATE on the dangers of jumping, livestock awareness and working in chutes, clean and safe work areas, and machinery safety.

ENCOURAGE the use of mounting aids, utility vehicles (if age permits), wheeled carts, additional mirrors, adaptable handles and other tools, adjustable seats and stools, anti-fatigue mats, proper footwear and braces, and proper mounting and lifting techniques.

JOINT INJURIES CAN BE PREVENTED by having correct working posture, reducing force on the joints, and decreasing the repetitions in movements by the joints.

WATCHING AND LEARNING from their family and other ag workers can raise awareness of the pain and limitations caused by Osteoarthritis.



## Where We Are Now...

- Sample Lesson Plans
- Captivate Online Course



### Contact Information

Amber Wolff- AgrAbility Project Coordinator- Arthritis Foundation  
307-227-5091 (direct line) or awolff@arthritis.org

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### Important Questions

- 1- Are more farm youth taking over tasks that they are not physically capable to do?
- 2- Are they able to understand the physical demands of the job?
- 3- Are there other factors in their life that affect their joint strength?



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## Why Are Youth At Risk?



- Lack of Experience
- Unfamiliar with the Work
- Risk-Takers
- Driven to Succeed
- Reluctant to Ask Questions
- Enthusiasm Outweighs Judgement





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LIMITATIONS + WORK TASKS +  
TOOLS AVAILABLE + ENVIRONMENT  
= ERGONOMICS**

**Find the best fit between the youth  
worker and the job- ensure that they  
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## Youth Outreach and Education

- High School Ag Programs
- 4-H Clubs
- FFA Chapters
- Local Farm Day/Ag Day Exhibits
- Social Media
- Online Courses
- Family Meetings



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Rural  
Arthritis  
Education  
Curriculum  
Resource

**Creak, Crack,  
Moan and Groan:  
Farm Kids  
Get Arthritis Too!**

*WORKING SMARTER, NOT HARDER,  
TO PREVENT ARTHRITIS PAIN  
IN AGRICULTURE*

Next 

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