



Kansas RTAP Fact Sheet

A Service of The University of Kansas Transportation Center for Rural Transit Providers

Be a Pain-Reliever

Accommodate passengers with arthritis

by Laura Snyder

With 25 percent of Kansans over age 18 having doctor-diagnosed arthritis, and 15.6 percent more having possible arthritis, the likelihood that you will transport someone with arthritis symptoms is great¹. Here are some suggestions of what you can do to make your passenger's boarding, ride, and exit more comfortable.

Individuals with *doctor-diagnosed arthritis*, according to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, are individuals who report they have been told by a health care professional that have some form of arthritis. There are

over 100 forms of arthritis. Some examples include osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, lupus, gout, fibromyalgia and carpal tunnel syndrome.

Individuals with *possible arthritis* are individuals who report that they have had symptoms of pain, aching, or stiffness in or around a joint during the past 30 days that began more than three months ago. However, they have never been told by a health care professional that they have a form of arthritis.

Of the Kansans with doctor-diagnosed arthritis, over a third report



Give support underneath the elbow, rather than grasping the rider's hand.

Sources

Impact of Doctor-Diagnosed Arthritis for Kansans. Kansas Arthritis Program fact sheet, Kansas Department of Health and Environment.

Provides statistics, by age, of Kansans with doctor-diagnosed arthritis.

"People with Arthritis Can Travel Too!" Eustice, Carol and Richard, 2005. http://www.arthritis.about.com/cs/travel/a/youcanttravel_p.htm.

This article gives advice for travelers with arthritis, as well as some tips for more comfortable car travel.

"Tips for Car Travel." Arthritis Foundation, 2004. http://www.arthritis.org/resources/travel/Automobiles/car_travel.asp.

This article tells how to use cushions, knee wedges, and seatbelt pads to minimize discomfort while traveling.

"How to Recognize the Signs of Arthritis," 2005. http://www.ehow.com/how_10162_recognize-signs-arthritis.html

Learn to identify the visible signs of arthritis in your passengers.

activity limitation, and 12 percent with possible arthritis reported activity limitation. This means tasks like boarding and exiting a bus are more difficult for passengers with arthritis.

Symptoms of arthritis may not be obvious in a passenger. A passenger with arthritis may seem to be in pain, have limited motion, or show fatigue. He or she may also have joints that creak and pop. You can also look for skin that is pulled taut over a swollen joint and shiny.

Although you should not ask the passenger what his or her condition is because of privacy concerns, you can always ask if and how you can be of assistance. Cindy Winters, manager of

the Kansas Arthritis Program, suggests this tip for offering assistance to passengers boarding the vehicle. “If you take them by the hand, do not squeeze it,” she says. “Give support underneath the elbow, and let the passenger gently rest his or her hand on yours.”

Encourage passengers with arthritis symptoms to sit toward the aisle so they can stretch their legs. If possible, adjust the seat so there is more leg room.

Getting up to exit the vehicle could also be a problem for a passenger. If there are no armrests for the passenger to push up from, you may want to again give support from under the elbow. “Don’t try to take their hands to help them, because you don’t want to put a lot of pressure on smaller joints,” says Winters. “Use a larger joint or area, like the elbow or the forearm.”

You can also carry a few items in your vehicle to make the trip more comfortable for passengers with arthritis. Winters recommends carrying a step-stool to assist passengers as they climb into the vehicle, especially if the first step of the bus is high.

You may want to have a pillow to offer to the passenger to place behind the neck or lower back for support. Seatbelt cushions that Velcro onto the shoulder strap are also a good idea.

Helping a passenger with arthritis is as simple as offering a hand or a pillow. By following these tips, you can make the ride more comfortable and enjoyable for your passenger.

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