

A BASIC OVERVIEW OF OSTEOARTHRITIS

What is Osteoarthritis?

“Osteoarthritis is a joint disease that mostly affects cartilage. Cartilage is the slippery tissue that covers the ends of bones in a joint. Healthy cartilage allows bones to glide over each other. It also helps absorb shock of movement. In osteoarthritis, the top layer of cartilage breaks down and wears away. This allows bones under the cartilage to rub together. The rubbing causes pain, swelling, and loss of motion of the joint. Over time, the joint may lose its normal shape. Also, bone spurs may grow on the edges of the joint. Bits of bone or cartilage can break off and float inside the joint space, which causes more pain and damage.

People with osteoarthritis often have joint pain and reduced motion. Unlike some other forms of arthritis, osteoarthritis affects only joints and not internal organs. Rheumatoid arthritis - the second most common form of arthritis - affects other parts of the body besides the joints. Osteoarthritis is the most common type of arthritis.”

Who gets Osteoarthritis?

The highest rates of osteoarthritis are among older people; however, younger people can get osteoarthritis due to sports injury or other physical trauma.

What causes Osteoarthritis?

- Being overweight
- Aging
- Joint injury
- Joints that are not properly formed
- A genetic defect in joint cartilage
- Stresses on the joints from certain jobs and playing sports.

How Is Osteoarthritis Treated?

Doctors often combine treatments to fit a patient's needs, lifestyle, and health. Osteoarthritis treatment has four main goals:

- Improve joint function
- Keep a healthy body weight
- Control pain
- Achieve a healthy lifestyle.

Osteoarthritis treatment plans can involve:

- Exercise
- Weight control

- Rest and joint care
- Nondrug pain relief techniques to control pain
- Medicines
- Complementary and alternative therapies
- Surgery

How Can Self-Care and a "Good-Health Attitude" Help?

Three kinds of programs help people learn about osteoarthritis and self-care and improve their good-health attitude:

- Patient education programs
- Arthritis self-management programs
- Arthritis support groups

These programs teach people about osteoarthritis and its treatments. They also have clear and long-lasting benefits. People in these programs learn to:

- Exercise and relax
- Talk with their doctor or other health care providers
- Solve problems

People with osteoarthritis find that self-management programs help them:

- Understand the disease
- Reduce pain while staying active
- Cope with their body, mind, and emotions
- Have more control over the disease
- Live an active, independent life

People with a good-health attitude:

- Focus on what they can do, not what they can't do
- Focus on their strengths, not their weaknesses
- Break down activities into small tasks that are easy to manage
- Build fitness and healthy eating into their daily routines
- Develop ways to lower and manage stress
- Balance rest with activity
- Develop a support system of family, friends, and health care providers.

– Source: [National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases](#)