

Osteoarthritis (OA)

Get to know OA with these simple facts

WHAT IS OSTEOARTHRITIS?

Osteoarthritis (OA) is the most common form of arthritis. OA commonly occurs in the knees, hips, lower back and neck, small joints of the fingers, and the bases of the thumbs and big toes. The shoulders and jaw joints may also be affected. Other joints are rarely involved, except as a result of joint injury or unusual stress on the joint.

OA affects all parts of a joint, but in particular, cartilage. In normal joints, a firm, rubbery material called cartilage covers the end of each bone. This cartilage provides a smooth, gliding surface for joint motion and acts as a cushion between the bones. In OA, this cartilage breaks down, leading to symptoms such as pain and swelling and problems using the joint.

SYMPTOMS OF OA

OA symptoms tend to build over time rather than show up suddenly. Symptoms can vary depending on the joint, your age, weight, joint alignment, fitness and physical activity level.

Common joint symptoms include:

- persistent or recurring pain, aching or tenderness
- stiffness and limited range of motion
- mild swelling
- clicking or cracking sound when bending
- enlargement or changes to the shape

Joints affected by OA usually hurt or feel stiff during or after use. Stiffness after not moving for a while is also common.

FACTORS THAT IMPACT OA

Aging | OA becomes more common as people age.

Gender | Under 50 years of age, OA is more common in men. At age 50 and over, it's more common in women.

Excess body weight | Overweight or obesity contributes to more severe symptoms and impact of OA, especially OA of the knees.

Joint injury | Traumatic injury to a joint, whether from sports or an accident, can increase the risk of developing OA, or accelerate OA.

TREATMENT

There is no cure for OA, but treatments can reduce pain and help you move more comfortably.

- ✓ Exercise
- ✓ Braces
- ✓ Oral or topical medications
- ✓ Weight loss
- ✓ Shoe inserts
- ✓ Self-management classes
- ✓ Heat/cold
- ✓ Occupational or Physical Therapy

For tips and resources, visit <https://oaaction.unc.edu/rxlinks/>



StandUp2OA.org