



# Learn to Live a Full Life with Osteoarthritis

Are you experiencing stiffness, swelling and/or pain in your joints? It could be caused by osteoarthritis (OA). Osteoarthritis is the most common type of arthritis.

You don't have to live with joint pain. Even though there is no cure for OA, there are many options to manage OA pain. Remember that people respond differently to treatments, so you may need to try several methods (or a combination of methods) to help you manage your OA symptoms. Talk to your healthcare provider about your treatment options.

It's important to get started today. For most people, OA could get worse over time if symptoms are not addressed now. Take steps today to get on the path to less joint pain.

## Recommended Treatments for OA

	Treatment	Hand	Knee	Hip
At-Home Treatments	Low-Impact Exercise			
	Weight Loss			
	Tai Chi			
	Injury Prevention Activities			
	Supportive Devices – Cane, braces, etc.			
	Self-management education			
	Therapeutic Heating/Cooling			
Support From A Professional	Yoga			
	Cognitive Behavioral Therapy			
	Acupuncture			
	Kinesiotaping			
Pharmacologic Approaches	Physical & Occupational Therapy			
	Oral NSAIDs – Over the Counter or Prescription			
	Topical NSAIDs			
	Acetaminophen - Over the Counter or Prescription			
	Tramadol or Duloxetine			
Surgical Options	Corticosteroid Injections			
	Surgery Joint Replacement			

\*Adapted from Kolasinski SL, Neogi T, Hochberg MC, et al. 2019 American College of Rheumatology/Arthritis Foundation Guideline for the Management of Osteoarthritis of the Hand, Hip, and Knee. *Arthritis Rheumatol.* 2020;72:220-233.

NSAIDs= Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (e.g., ibuprofen, naproxen sodium).

## Questionable Treatments

There is little scientific evidence that the following alternative treatments are effective or safe to address OA pain. Combining any medications (over-the-counter or prescription) carries risk. It is important that you discuss any non-prescribed medications or supplements with your healthcare provider.

- CBD products
- Glucosamine supplements
- Vitamins & Minerals
- Turmeric
- Fish oil
- Herbal treatments

Taking the first step is often the hardest in managing your OA symptoms. We asked people with OA to tell us what they do to stay motivated and keep moving to help manage their joint pain. Maybe some of these ideas will inspire you to keep on the path to less joint pain:

- Strive to stay physically active throughout the day, even if you have to try shorter “bursts” of activity. [Walk With Ease](#) can help you learn to walk safely and comfortably and can help to keep you motivated and accountable.
- Losing weight is hard. When the going gets tough, remember that any weight loss amount can help relieve some of your pain by decreasing pressure on your joints.
- Chronic pain can make you feel isolated and lonely. Maintain a support network of family and friends to feel connected with those you love. Enrolling in an online support group such as [HealthUnlocked](#) or [Facebook StandUp2OA](#) support group is a great way to share what you are going through with others who understand.
- Keep a positive mindset. This might be easier said than done, but small moments of joy can have big impacts. Consider starting a daily gratitude journal or taking time to reflect on the things that have gone well recently.
- Recognize, understand, and accept that OA will affect how you move your body, which will impact your life. Assistance in the form of a cane, walker, braces, cushions, or a body pillow may be needed to help reduce the amount of pressure on your joints.
- Work with a trusted physical therapist/physiotherapist to learn safe exercises to keep your muscles strong and joints flexible.

*There is no cure for arthritis – however, joint pain and OA symptoms can be managed through treatment, lifestyle changes, and education.*

*Visit [oaaction.unc.edu/jointpain](http://oaaction.unc.edu/jointpain) to learn how you can get on the path to less joint pain.*

*“It was scary getting back to exercise and daily walking. I shuddered at the idea of the word exercise, but I didn’t like what I saw in the mirror. I didn’t like the way I started to feel sluggish, tired, and in pain. I remembered how I felt without all the weight and I wanted that feeling again. They say, for every pound you lose, it takes 4 lbs off your knees. I can feel the difference when I walk and manage my weight.”*

**Denise Allen**  
Individual with OA

