

Understanding Your Joint Pain: Know the Signs & Symptoms of Osteoarthritis

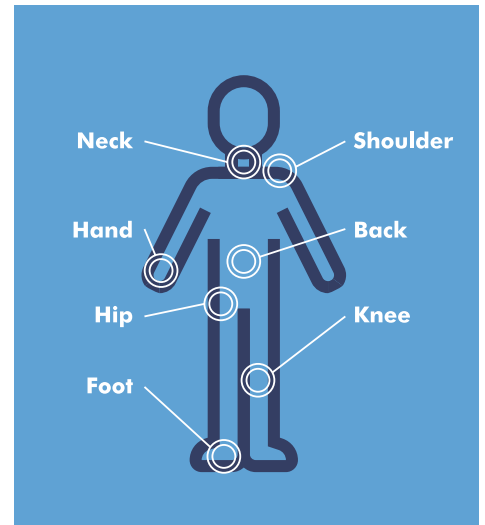


Joint pain is common, but you shouldn't have to "just live" with it. There are many ways to reduce joint pain so you can stay active your entire life.

Osteoarthritis (OA) is the most common type of arthritis, especially among older people. OA symptoms vary by the individual. For most people, OA can get worse over time if you don't address the pain and symptoms now.

What is OA? Osteoarthritis mostly affects cartilage. The surface layer of cartilage breaks down and wears away. This allows bones under the cartilage to rub together, causing pain, swelling and loss of motion of the joint. Over time, these changes can affect the bones, tendons, and other joint tissues.

What are some of the causes of OA? Risk factors or causes of OA include aging, excess body weight, a prior joint injury, being female, genetics, and excessive/repetitive movement from certain jobs or sports.



OA Signs & Symptoms

- Joint pain typically in the hands, knees, feet, neck, hips and spine
- Several minutes of stiffness in a joint after getting out of bed or sitting for a long time
- Mild swelling or tenderness in one or more joints


What is the difference between OA and RA? Rheumatoid arthritis (RA) affects far fewer people than OA. RA is an autoimmune disease in which the body's immune system attacks its tissues, including joints and organs. As compared to RA, OA affects only the joints, which causes changes to a joint's cartilage, shape, and movement.

*There is no cure for arthritis - however, joint pain and OA symptoms can be managed through treatment, lifestyle changes and education. Make an appointment with your healthcare provider and use the **Talking With My Provider Worksheet** to get you moving on a path to less joint pain.*

Visit oaaction.unc.edu/jointpain for more information.

Talking With My Provider

Use this worksheet to help you talk to your healthcare provider about your joint pain. Don't be afraid to advocate for your health - be specific about what you are experiencing and your treatment goals.

<p>Where is your pain? Circle the locations of your pain, regardless of whether you experience constant pain or short flares.</p>		
<p>Check all that apply to you:</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Over 45 <input type="checkbox"/> Excess body weight <input type="checkbox"/> A prior joint injury <input type="checkbox"/> Female	<input type="checkbox"/> Genetics or family history <input type="checkbox"/> Excessive/repetitive movement from certain jobs or sports
<p>How long have you had pain in these areas?</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Days <input type="checkbox"/> Weeks	<input type="checkbox"/> Months <input type="checkbox"/> Years
<p>When in pain, how long does the pain last?</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Less than a minute <input type="checkbox"/> Hours	<input type="checkbox"/> Days to Weeks <input type="checkbox"/> Constant – no relief
<p>What activities make the pain worse?</p>		
<p>List any activities you have stopped or any daily activities that are affected due to joint pain.</p>		
<p>Is there anything new or different about the joint pain you've experienced lately?</p>		
<p>Check the treatments you have tried. Circle or highlight the ones that have been successful in reducing your pain.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Physical Activity _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Weight loss <input type="checkbox"/> Heat/cold packs <input type="checkbox"/> Braces <input type="checkbox"/> Shoe inserts	<input type="checkbox"/> Over the counter medication _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Prescribed medication _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Occupational or Physical Therapy <input type="checkbox"/> Acupuncture <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____
<p>Questions for your healthcare provider about joint pain and treatment. <i>Add all the questions you have about joint pain and treatment.</i></p> <p>Here are some recommendations to make sure you ask:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What treatments are best for my type of pain? • What are some online resources that you trust for information? • Will my pain get worse over time? Can it spread to other joints? 		