

Osteoarthritis: A Leading Cause of Disability

OA is a chronic condition in many individuals who also have heart disease, diabetes, and obesity. Physical activity is a recommended management strategy for all these conditions but can be more difficult for people with OA because of joint pain.

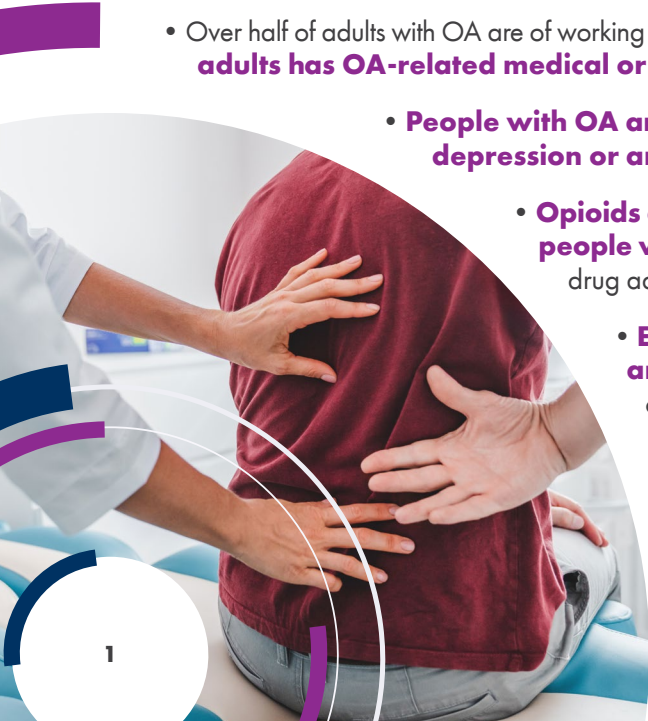


To learn more about the vision and strategies for reducing the burden of OA, read [A National Public Health Agenda for Osteoarthritis: 2020 Update](#)



WHY OA MATTERS

- **OA was the most expensive condition** for which privately insured patients were hospitalized, accounting for over \$6.2 billion in hospital costs.
- **Medical costs attributable to OA are significant** due to the effects of disability, comorbid disease, and treatment. These annual medical costs total \$65.5 billion, with an average cost per person per year of \$2,018.
- Over half of adults with OA are of working age (18 to 64 years old). **One in 14 of these working adults has OA-related medical or pharmacy claims.**
 - **People with OA are more likely to fall, and 1/3 suffer from depression or anxiety** due to pain and disability from OA.
 - **Opioids and benzodiazepines are prescribed for 27% of people with OA**, despite the high risk of adverse side effects and drug addiction and a lack of evidence supporting this approach.
 - **Early intervention is critical, as delays in diagnosis and care lead to worsening of disease**, recurrence of injury, more severe injury, time off at work, and further disability. Making evidence-based interventions widely available and accessible can be done at a relatively low cost with significant long-term savings.



ACT NOW!

As an insurer, you can play a critical leadership role in strengthening your policies and benefits packages to support early diagnosis of OA. Taking these actions can also help reduce costs associated with OA management. Look for opportunities to tailor offerings to meet your specific needs and to assure equity in access and delivery of your interventions by using telehealth, mobile technology, and other virtual or remote innovations.

1 **Commit to taking on the challenge of OA and ensure that healthcare providers in your network are up to date on the latest evidence-based treatment options, including pain management.**



[Primary Care Toolkit – OA Care Tools](#): Educational information for primary care providers to expand knowledge of OA, plus patient-facing handouts and resources that can help empower patients to engage in self-management strategies to complement clinical care.



[Hospital for Special Surgery \(HSS\) – On-Demand Webinars on a variety of health topics such as Osteoarthritis Management, Pain & Stress Management, and more](#): Free service offered to the HSS community with playlists of streaming videos focusing on a variety of health topics.



[Experts in Arthritis – Updates on Osteoarthritis, Rheumatoid Arthritis, and Juvenile Arthritis](#): Free public education seminar for people with arthritis and those who care about them, providing current information about scientific evidence and management strategies in the treatment and care of osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, and juvenile arthritis.



[Overview of the American College of Rheumatology \(ACR\) Guidelines for the Treatment of Osteoarthritis](#): Pre-recorded webinar of Dr. Amanda Nelson, MD, MSCR, RhMSUS, presenting on the latest (2019) ACR guidelines for OA management.

2 **Build incentives into insurance packages** for adopting prevention strategies that target multiple risk factors for OA and other chronic conditions and encompass value-based reimbursement models.



3

Amend reimbursement policies to support participation in evidence-based, self-management education and physical activity programs in community and workplace settings, particularly for those on Medicare.

4

Bundle evidence-based OA interventions with other evidence-based health promotion programs to provide more comprehensive and long-term approaches to managing related chronic conditions.



[Resource library and educational toolkits for healthcare providers:](#)

Includes pain communication tools, outcome measures for use in clinical care and patient education, and a review of guidelines for the management of OA.



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