

Osteoarthritis in the Workplace:

A serious and costly disease¹

What can employers do to help reduce the burden?

Arthritis



Musculoskeletal diseases affect more than 50% of people in the United States age 18 and over.² Trauma, back pain, and arthritis are the three most common musculoskeletal conditions reported.²



Osteoarthritis (OA) is the most common form of arthritis, affecting 1 in 7 US adults.²



Arthritis is a leading cause of disability among adults in the U.S.³



More than half of individuals with symptomatic knee OA are of working age (younger than 65).⁴



Among people younger than 45, OA is more common among men; above age 45, OA is more common in women.⁴



The knee is the most common site for OA, followed by the hip. OA of the knee accounts for about one-third (31%) of outpatient healthcare visits for OA.²



OA is among the most expensive conditions to treat when joint replacement surgery is required.⁵ In fact, OA was the second most costly health condition treated at US hospitals in 2013, accounting for \$16.5 billion.⁵

OA and other health conditions



31% of people with OA have 5 or more other chronic conditions, with the most common being heart disease, diabetes mellitus and hypertension.¹



OA significantly limits a person's ability to self-manage other conditions, such as diabetes and hypertension, because OA-related pain is associated with reduced physical activity.⁶



OA is associated with increased risk of disability and activity limitations.¹

Productivity and cost of OA in the workplace



In 2013, total lost wages due to any form of arthritis were **\$164 billion**. Adults with arthritis earned **\$4,040 less pay annually** compared to those without.⁵

In 2013, fewer adults with arthritis (77%) were able to work compared to adults without arthritis (84%).⁴

For employees with OA, OA pain can result in missed days of work (**absenteeism**) and less productivity while at work (**presenteeism**).⁷

- ✓ Presenteeism is the primary source of work impairment, with almost **10 hours per week lost while at work**⁷
- ✓ Workers with OA **are more likely to be absent from work and miss more days of work** than workers without OA⁸

Musculoskeletal disorders are the most common cause of short-term disability claims.⁹ Disability claims related to OA are among the longest in duration and most expensive among all conditions.^{9*}

*This data is from medical claims.

What can employers do?

Employers should be asking themselves these questions:

- What is the prevalence of OA in your workforce?
- How are your employees with OA utilizing the health care system? Are employees using primary or specialty care? Are employees engaged in disease management programs?
- How are your employees with OA utilizing their disability, workers compensation, occupational health services, injury and leave benefits?
- What onsite support programs like physical or occupational therapy and yoga do you offer?
- How does your workplace support employees with arthritis through safety programs, benefits, ergonomic supports, etc?¹⁰



For more information about arthritis in the workplace and to get tips on making your workplace more arthritis-inclusive, visit www.oacaretools.org.

OAAA collaborated with Pfizer in the development of this resource.

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