

Osteoarthritis: What is it & what you should know

From the private desk of:

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Brief Introduction

Thank you for deciding to learn more about the disorder, Osteoarthritis. Inside these pages, you will learn what it is, who is most at risk for developing it, what causes it, and some treatment plans to help those that do have it feel better.

While there is no definitive "cure" for Osteoarthritis, there are ways in which individuals can improve their quality of life and change the discomfort level to one that can be tolerated on a daily basis.

There are currently more than 100 different forms of arthritis, which Osteoarthritis is just one of. But, because it is one of the most common forms many people suffer from it is important to know all the facts associated to be sure that you are not someone that is, or could suffer from Osteoarthritis without clue number one of what to do or how to handle it.

I hope that you find some of the answers you've been searching for throughout these brief pages and a greater understanding of what someone you love may be going through at this very moment.

All The Best of Health,



What Is Osteoarthritis?

Osteoarthritis, otherwise known as "degenerative joint disease", is one of the most common forms of arthritis with more than 20 million Europeans sufferers to date.

While most people that suffer from the most severe forms of Osteoarthritis are age 60 or higher, this particular disease begins its disabling effects before then. As stated earlier, it is a "degenerative" disease, therefore its effects to our bodies happen over a span of a lifetime. However, some people as young as 25 can experience the same pain as someone 65 in age.

The word "Osteoarthritis" is derived from two words standing for joint and inflammation. So it's easy to see how this disease operates within the human body. If not, let's delve a little deeper and expand upon the definition.

At each point where our bodies have the ability to bend, or the joints, our bones come together divided by small areas that are made up of cartilage. The cartilage acts as a connection point between our bones providing us with a wider range of motion that would not be possible without it. We could not walk, bend, sit, or twist. We would be pretty much motionless without the ever important cartilage.

As we age, our cartilage becomes weakened since it is in a state of perpetual use day after day. And, the weaker it becomes, the more prone our "meeting place" bones are to begin rubbing as we bend our arms or legs causing more and more pain.

The break down, or "wear-and-tear", of our cartilage can cause the joint area to change its original shape. When this happens, tiny deposits of bone can form throughout the edges of the joint. These are medically classified as "osteophytes", but you may know them better as "bone spurs".

In addition, small bits of cartilage or bone can break off inside the joints that float about often times causing even more damage, and of course more pain.

Wherever we can pivot our bodies, we can develop Osteoarthritis. Hands, knees, hips, and the spine are the most common places this disease occurs.

Osteoarthritis only affects the joint areas making it painful when performing many simply, daily tasks such as standing, sitting, shaking hands, or walking. Other forms of arthritis such as rheumatoid (the second most common form of arthritis) or lupus affect areas such as the skin, lungs, eyes, liver, or blood vessels.

Osteoarthritis is a chronic disease. Meaning, it develops without any specific reason and continues for lengthy time periods spanning years, even a lifetime. There is no known cure for Osteoarthritis, but there are treatment plans that can lessen the severity of its symptoms for sufferers. and, because Osteoarthritis has been termed "chronic", the treatment plans may change over the course of time. Some of the available treatments will be outlined further on so you know what can be done to help deal with the every day pain.

Now you know what Osteoarthritis is, it's time to discuss who is most at risk for developing it. . .

Who Is Most At Risk For Osteoarthritis?

The most obvious answer to who is most at risk would be the elderly. And if this is your answer, then you're right.

Men 40 years and older are more likely to develop Osteoarthritis than women their age. However, when women hit the age of 45, they too can begin seeing the signs of Osteoarthritis as well. Not exactly "elderly" though, is it? ;-)

Actually, people age 60 or older do indeed have Osteoarthritis in one joint area or another. Sometimes multiple joint areas are affected. It is estimated that by the year 2030 approximately 20 percent of Europeans age 65 will be at the highest risk for Osteoarthritis.

Although, people as young as 25 can also develop Osteoarthritis as a result of a joint injury which is more common in those that regularly participate in sports or jobs that excessively depend on the joints such as football, foot racing(running), warehouse work, hard labour, Etc.

Younger adults may also develop Osteoarthritis due to malformed joints or cartilage that has genetic defects.

People who are overweight also can see earlier signs of Osteoarthritis due to extra stress placed on areas such as the knees, which is one of the most common body joints affected right beneath the hands due to the growing amount of people aging.

In fact, the order of the most common places to suffer from Osteoarthritis are as follows:

- *Finger Joints(the hands)*
- *Knees*
- *Spinal Column(the neck and lower back)*
- *Hips*

Osteoarthritis can also be hereditary. If your family has a history of the disease, you have a better chance of developing it later in life. But at this time, there are not enough medical facts to support this claim and testing is still being done.

On a positive note, not everyone who has Osteoarthritis will experience severe pain. Some people are lucky enough to breeze through with mild to moderate pain with little treatment.

And if you're looking for "causes" of Osteoarthritis, well, that cannot be provided. The reason is that it is a "chronic" disease therefore it has no specific causes but rather has a set of determining factors instead such as those mentioned above.

Symptoms of Osteoarthritis

So, how can we determine whether or not we may be suffering from Osteoarthritis? There are certain symptomatic conditions that will aid you in a "self" pre-diagnosis of sorts so that you can begin asking your family Doctor specific questions to determine whether or not you have Osteoarthritis.

If you have experienced a grinding or crackling sound within your fingers, hands, knees, or hips, this may be an indicator that you could have Osteoarthritis as many people currently affected by it claim that this is heard or felt.

Burning sensations within your joints also may be a sign.
Stiffness or soreness of the joints when awakening from sleep or being stationery in a certain position for longer periods of time.
Swelling, tenderness, or redness of certain joint areas.

Inability to perform daily tasks normally due to pain, stiffness, or soreness within the joint areas. This symptom will worsen over time and may only be an annoyance at the early onset of Osteoarthritis.

And, while the above are physical symptoms, some people also experience depression and anxiety as a by product of the seemingly decrease in the quality of life in general.

Treatment for Osteoarthritis

Before any treatment regimen can begin with successful results, a proper diagnosis must be made, and this is handled by a medical professional such as a family doctor.

Make an appointment with your doctor to discuss current symptoms you may be experiencing. Be 100% honest so that he/she can make a proper diagnosis from the problems you describe.

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You may be given an MRI scan or blood tests may be done too.

You may also be given a physical examination as well checking your reflexes, muscle strength, and overall health. All these things can be effective in a competent diagnosis of Osteoarthritis.

In the early stages of Osteoarthritis, you can try some self prescribed changes such as increasing your daily physical activity through exercise, changing your eating habits to include more healthy foods that contain natural anti-oxidants, vitamin c, b9, b12, d, and vitamin e, or taking pain relievers such as acetaminophen can all help to lessen pain associated with Osteoarthritis in combination and moderation.

The key elements to successful homeopathic treatment are:

Exercise - Get plenty of exercise concentrating on range of motion type work outs or aerobics to help strengthen the joints. Taking walks and swimming are excellent ways to encourage strengthening joints.

Weight Loss - Since heavier people will put more stress on their joints, it is always a good idea to try and lose some weight to diminish this stress. Plus, it will improve your overall health and happiness at the same time.

Adequate Rest - Be sure to get good amounts of sleep at regularly scheduled times, such as going to bed at a certain time and waking at a certain time in the morning. Eight hours is normally what is suggested for a sufficient night's rest.

Use Over The Counter Pain Relievers - If the pain is moderate, it is recommended to use pain relievers that include acetaminophen to help reduce it.

Use in moderation of course and if the recommended dosage isn't relieving the pain, then you should consult your Doctor for stronger alternatives they can provide you with. Or, if you are experiencing mild to moderate inflammation, ibuprofen is a good choice to help reduce this.

Topical Treatments - Some creams and lotions that contain the ingredient capsaicin can help decrease the amount of pain experienced in the joint areas.

Heat or Cold - Applying moist heat to sore joints can help dull the pain somewhat and can be effective as homeopathic treatment for mild to moderate pain. On the same token, if swelling occurs, applying cold to the affected area can alleviate some of the swelling and discomfort associated.

There are also other alternatives such as joint replacement surgery that your doctor can suggest if all other treatment therapies have been thus unsuccessful.

The thing to remember is not to give up or get too unhappy about your situation. If the pain is too unbearable and all other treatments have failed, your doctor can prescribe much stronger pain relievers such as tramadol, hydrocodone, oxycodone, or morphine.

Of course these are classified as narcotics and are considered a controlled substance, so for these you **MUST** have a prescription from your family Doctor, and it is the **ONLY** way you can receive them.

More alternative methods include acupuncture, prolotherapy, or low level laser therapy, but may not be as effective as those therapeutic strategies suggested by your doctor.

Please remember, these are my suggestions based on my past experience, if in doubt always ask your Doctor or other medical practitioner.