

Osteoarthritis

OA is the most common type of arthritis. It tends to occur in middle age or due to an injury or obesity.

Sometimes called wear and tear arthritis, osteoarthritis (OA) is the most common type of arthritis. When the smooth cushion between bones (cartilage) breaks down, joints can get painful, swollen and hard to move. OA can affect any joint, but it occurs most often in hands, knees, hips, lower back and neck. OA can happen at any age, but it commonly starts in the 50s and affects women more than men. This disease starts gradually and worsens over time. But there are ways to manage OA to prevent or minimize pain and keep mobile. Some people never develop OA.

Causes

Osteoarthritis was long believed to be caused by the wearing down of joints over time. But scientists now see it as a disease of the joint.

Here are some things that may contribute to OA:

- **Age.** The risk of developing OA increases someone gets older because bones, muscles and joints are also aging.
- **Joint injury.** A break or tear, can lead to OA after years.
- **Overuse.** Using the same joints over and over in a job or sport can result in OA.
- **Obesity.** Extra weight puts more stress on a joint and fats cells promote inflammation.
- **Weak muscles.** Joints can get out of the right position when there's not enough support.
- **Genes.** People with family members who have OA are more likely to develop OA.
- **Sex.** Women are more likely to develop OA than men.

Symptoms tend to build over time rather than show up suddenly. They include:

- Pain or aching in the joint during activity, after long activity or at the end of the day.
- Joint stiffness usually occurs first thing in the morning or after resting.
- Limited range of motion that may go away after movement.
- Clicking or cracking sound when a joint bends.
- Swelling around a joint.
- Muscle weakness around the joint.
- Joint instability or buckling (knee gives out).

Here are ways that OA may affect different parts of the body:

- **Hips.** Pain is felt in the groin area or buttocks and sometimes on the inside of the knee or thigh.

- **Knees.** A “grating” or “scraping” feeling when moving the knee.
- **Fingers.** Bony growths (spurs) at the edge of joints can cause fingers to become swollen, tender and red. There may be pain at the base of the thumb.
- **Feet.** The big toe feels painful and tender. Ankles or toes may swell.

As OA gets worse, cartilage may get uneven edges and cracks. Bones may harden, change shape and get bumpy. Once cartilage breaks down, it doesn’t grow back on its own.

Health Effects

Pain, reduced mobility, side effects from medications and other factors associated with osteoarthritis can lead to negative health effects not directly related to the joint disease.

Obesity, Diabetes and Heart Disease

Knee or hip pain may make it harder to exercise. That can cause or worsen weight gain and lead to obesity. Being overweight or obese can lead to the development of high cholesterol, diabetes, heart disease and high blood pressure.

Falls

People with osteoarthritis experience as much as 30 percent more falls and have a 20 percent greater risk of fracture than those without OA. Having OA can decrease function, weaken muscles and make it more likely that someone has a fall. Side effects from pain medications, such as dizziness

Osteoporosis is a bone disease that occurs when the body loses too much bone, makes too little bone, or both. As a result, bones become weak and may break from a fall or, in serious cases, from sneezing or minor bumps. **Osteoporosis** means “porous bone.” Viewed under a microscope,