



Living with Osteoarthritis

Arthritis is a disease that involves swelling and pain in the joints — the place where two bones meet. Osteoarthritis is a form of degenerative arthritis, meaning a slow, irreversible decline in joint function.



Over 50 million adults in the United States have some type of arthritis. Although there are more than 100 different types of arthritis, when most people talk about arthritis they are referring to the most common type: osteoarthritis.

More common in women, osteoarthritis causes chronic (long-term) symptoms and tends to occur more often as you age.

You are more at risk for osteoarthritis if you:

- Are overweight
- Have a family history of arthritis
- Are elderly
- Have had a previous joint injury



HOW TO MANAGE JOINT PAIN AS YOU AGE

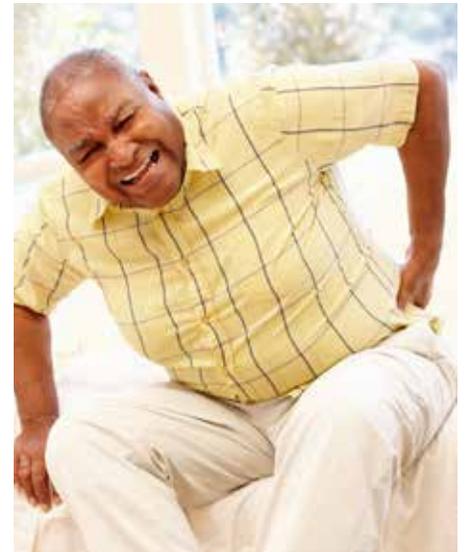
If you have osteoarthritis, your symptoms may come and go and they may become worse over time. Osteoarthritis symptoms can become so severe that you are unable to do certain things you could previously, such as write or walk up and down stairs.

The most common symptoms of osteoarthritis include:

- Pain and stiffness
- Swelling near the joints
- Trouble moving around without pain
- Decreased range of motion

You can help prevent or delay osteoarthritis symptoms by doing the following:

- Regularly exercising
- Doing muscle strengthening activities
- Avoiding repetitive movements that wear on joints
- Maintaining a healthy weight



LIVING WITH OSTEOARTHRITIS

If you have mild or early symptoms of osteoarthritis, you can help manage your pain using these tips:

- Keep moving — mild exercise, such as walking, at least once a day
- Rest after activity
- Alternate hot and cold on the affected joints
- Massage therapy
- Take over the counter anti-inflammatory pain relief



Most mild or moderate arthritis can be treated with a combination of anti-inflammatory medicine and hot/cold therapy or pain relieving creams, rubs or sprays. Some people find that acupuncture can also relieve arthritis symptoms.

When arthritis pain becomes severe, your doctor may recommend mild narcotic medicines with codeine or hydrocodone for pain. Some patients also find temporary joint pain relief with corticosteroid injections. When medical treatment no longer provides relief, joint replacement surgery may be an option.

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