

## OSTEOARTHRITIS OF JOINTS CONTINUED

### ◇ Hands:

- ◇ Mainly women
- ◇ Base of thumb and joints at end of fingers.
- ◇ Gradually over years firm knobby swellings form on the back of joints.

### ◇ Neck/Back:

- ◇ Often called spondylosis

### ◇ Foot:

- ◇ Generally affects the base of the big toe.
- ◇ Big toe may become stiff

## SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

- ◇ It tends to creep up on you., gradually increasing over months or years.
- ◇ Stiff and painful joints are the main symptoms.
- ◇ Stiffness at rest usually improves after a couple of minutes of movement.
- ◇ Creaks or cracks
- ◇ Joint may give way because of weak muscles or loss of stability.
- ◇ Changes in the weather can make joint pain worse.
- ◇ Joint appears swollen
- ◇ In more severe cases, constant pain may develop.

## WHAT ARE THE PROSPECTS?

- ◇ Osteoarthritis does not always get worse.
- ◇ Most people carry on with a normal life
- ◇ It usually reaches a peak after a few years of the symptoms starting, and stays the same or gets a little easier.

- ◇ For others, one or more joints worsen as the years go by, and it may become painful or disabling.
- ◇ There are a number of treatments that can improve symptoms and certain changes in lifestyle can greatly reduce symptoms and risks.

## GLOSSARY

**Capsule:** tough, fibrous sleeve around the joint. Its inner layer is the synovium.

**Cartilage:** strong material on bone ends that acts as a cushion. Its slipper surface allows smooth movement.

**Deformity:** abnormal growth or swelling of a joint.

**Ligaments:** tough, fibrous bands anchoring the bones either side of a joint and holding the joint together.

**Osteophytes:** overgrowth of new bone around the sides of joints also known as 'spurs'.

**Perthes disease:** inflammation of the head of the thigh bone which causes pain and limping. Usually in boys 5-10years.

**Spondylosis:** osteoarthritis of small joints in the neck and back.

**Synovial fluid:** the fluid produced by the synovium to nourish and lubricate the joint.

## Contacts:

[www.arc.org.uk](http://www.arc.org.uk) or 0870 850 5000

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## OSTEOARTHRITIS

Osteoarthritis is a disease that affects the joints in the body. The surface of the joint is damaged and the surrounding bone grows thicker.

Osteo = bone

Arthr = joint

Itis = inflammation and damage

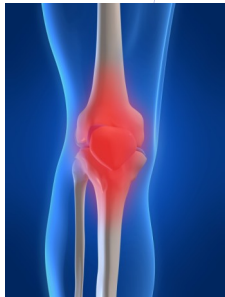


# OSTEOARTHRITIS

## A NORMAL JOINT

To understand osteoarthritis, you need to understand a normal joint and how it works.

The ends of bones are covered by a thin layer of



cartilage, which cushions the joints and spreads forces evenly. It also allows bone to move freely.

The joint is covered by a membrane (synovium) which produces synovial

fluid—this helps nourish cartilage and lubricate the joint. It has a tough outer layer called a capsule which prevents the joint moving too much.



Synovial fluid

The tendons and ligaments attach bones together and muscles to bones. They help keep the joint in place.

## A JOINT WITH OSTEOARTHRITIS

When a joint develops osteoarthritis, the cartilage gradually roughens and becomes thin, and the bone underneath thickens.

The bones grow outwards and develop osteophytes or bony spurs. The synovium swells slightly and can cause the joint to swell. The capsule slowly thickens and ligaments contract, the muscles may become weak or wasted.



Adapted from eorthopod.com on 1st August 2009

The joint under a microscope can be seen to be actively trying to repair itself, for example the development of osteophytes.

It is a slow process and develops over many years. In severe osteoarthritis, the cartilage can become so thin that it no longer covers the thickened bone ends, and they then start to touch and wear away. This can cause deformity.

## WHAT CAUSES OSTEOARTHRITIS?

There are many factors that can increase the risk of getting osteoarthritis, usually several have to be present before osteoarthritis develops:

**Age** - usually starts in the late 40s, 50s or 60s. It is uncommon before the age of 40s.

**Sex** - knees and hands, osteoarthritis is more common and severe in women.

**Obesity** - this is an important factor in causing osteoarthritis, especially at the knee. It also increases the chances of it worsening once it has

developed.

**Joint injury** - a major injury or operation may lead to osteoarthritis in that joint later in life.

**Very hard repetitive activity** may injure joints and cause osteoarthritis in later life.

**Heredity** - nodal osteoarthritis runs strongly in families.

## HOW COMMON IS IT?

By far the most common joint disease. 10-20% of people aged 65+ suffer from hip or knee arthritis.

About 8 million people in the country are affected, and about 1 million people seek treatment.

Of others, many may realize they have osteoarthritis, or suffer from any pain, although it is very common to spot it on x-rays.

## OSTEOARTHRITIS OF JOINTS

### ◇ Knee:

- ◇ more common in women than men.
- ◇ Overweight and nodal arthritis increase risk
- ◇ Previous injury or operation
- ◇ Pain is usually felt at front and sides of knee
- ◇ In severe cases the knees can become bent and bowed.

### ◇ Hip:

- ◇ Men = women
- ◇ Risk is increased in farmers
- ◇ Hip problems at birth such as perthes disease may lead to arthritis
- ◇ Pain is usually felt in the groin, but sometimes around the side and front of the thigh, buttock or down to knee.

