

For more information...

If you want to learn more, contact:

The Arthritis Society @ 613-967-1933

or

Internet: www.arthritis.ca

Osteoarthritis



Did you know?



Black Diamond Road
Cannifton, Ontario
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About osteoarthritis

Osteoarthritis is one of the most common diseases that affect seniors. It is a degenerative disease that affects joints and the cartilage that covers the ends of the bones in the joints. The cartilage wears away and this results in pain and loss of movement. Many residents don't have inflamed joints and this condition is called *osteoarthritis*. But since most people think of joint pain as *osteoarthritis*, that's the term that we usually use. The four letters "*itis*" means inflamed. The joints are red, swollen and painful. The areas most commonly affected are the knees and hands, and the next most common groups are the spine, hips ankles and shoulders Osteoarthritis usually starts in middle age and **affects more women than men**; however, some teenagers have developed the disease.

The cause of osteoarthritis

The exact cause of osteoarthritis is not known. "Wear and tear" is the most common explanation. Although this accounts for a large percentage of the people with the condition, some people who have continually lived the exact same lifestyle as others may not get osteoarthritis. Doctors now think there may be something in our bodies that may not protect us from **osteoarthritis**.

Symptoms

The first symptom is usually an ache in the **joint** or a "**crunching or cracking**" sound. The joint can be stiff or wobbly. The pain increases and the joint can become swollen. This usually lasts a short time and the pain and swelling disappear. However, the same cycle occurs frequently. Often people with osteoarthritis can predict when it's going to rain because their pain increases with high humidity.

Risk factors

Studies have shown that several factors can increase a person's risk for osteoarthritis.

They are:

- Aging
- Lack of exercise
- Being a woman
- Obesity
- Poor posture
- Joint injury that never healed well
- Genetic influences that cause the cartilage to break down faster.

Treatments

There is no known cure for osteoarthritis.

There are a variety of strategies and treatments that a person can apply to control and reduce the pain and swelling. Research has shown that regular exercise and properly applied relaxation techniques can help.

There are many medications that seniors can take to control the pain. Aspirin and non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDS) can be used to treat the inflammation and pain. If the medication that your family member is taking is not relieving the pain, please inform the nursing staff.

What the family can do

There is no diet cure for osteoarthritis.

Seniors need to have a balanced diet and to maintain normal body weight. If you want to bring special treats for your family member, it is advisable to bring foods that she would enjoy and that are beneficial to her health. Seasonal fruits and juices are examples.

Exercise can help relieve the pain of swollen joints. Family members are encouraged to help the resident use their arms, legs and hands. For example, helping to comb her hair, taking short walks, or helping wash the face are good ways to encourage movement.

But the key to protecting the resident from undue pain and discomfort is gentle handling. Knowing what you can do to help is a great step in increasing the comfort of your family member.