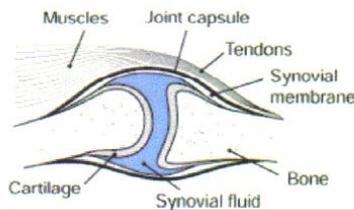


Osteoarthritis

Osteoarthritis (OA) or degenerative joint disease, affects more than 20 million people in the United States.

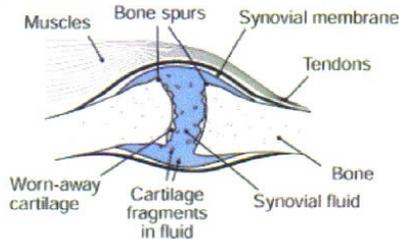
What is Osteoarthritis? OA is characterized as the breakdown of the joint's cartilage. The function of cartilage is to provide shock absorbency and reduce friction as the joint glides. OA produces thinning and damage to the cartilage, which will breakdown and become rough and eroded. Inflammation results in the development of bony ridges and spurs. Cartilage and bone are further damaged as the bones rub together and deformity results when one side of the joint collapses more than the other side. OA most frequently occurs in the knees, hips, ankles, hands and other weight bearing joints.

A Healthy Joint



In a healthy joint, the ends of bones are encased in smooth cartilage. Together, they are protected by a joint capsule lined with a synovial membrane that produces synovial fluid. The capsule and fluid protect the cartilage, muscles, and connective tissues.

A Joint With Osteoarthritis



With osteoarthritis, the cartilage becomes worn away. Spurs grow out from the edge of the bone, and synovial fluid increases. Altogether, the joint feels stiff and sore.

What causes Osteoarthritis?

Primary OA is commonly linked to old age when the joint cartilage breaks down due to wear and tear of the joint. Research shows that OA is not an inevitable part of aging.

Secondary OA may be due to some physical conditions such as congenital defects and obesity. Other risk factors for OA are the following:

- Bow legs
- Dislocated hip
- Genetic defects that affect the cartilage
- Overuse or injury to the joint in accidents/ sports
- Diabetes, goad and other hormone disorders
- Poor posture

What are the symptoms of Osteoarthritis?

Symptoms can vary from person to person. Some people find the condition debilitating while others hardly have any symptoms. Pain is the primary symptoms of the disease and is commonly brought on through activity. Other symptoms may include the following:

- Loss of movement
- Stiffness and swelling in the joints
- Snapping of the joints
- Bony growths at the joints

How Can Osteoarthritis be treated?

Treatment of OA should focus on decreasing pain and improving joint movement. **Weight control** with diet and **appropriate exercise** is extremely important to decrease stress on the arthritic joints. Range of motion and strengthening exercises are important to maintain or improve joint mobility and increase the strength of the muscles surrounding the joint and minimizes the stress on those joints. Heat and cold therapy applied locally may be helpful in controlling the pain. Joint protection or rest is important to prevent strain on the painful joints. Your doctor may prescribe medications to ease the pain and inflammation associated with OA. These may included non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, NSAIDs. Another important consideration is that patient may need to adapt to their abilities and limitations and remain committed and optimistic about the ability to manage the arthritis through good medical, surgical and rehabilitative care.