

OSTEO- ARTHRITIS



Osteoarthritis is the most common form of arthritis, especially among older people. However, younger people also do suffer from osteoarthritis as a result of excessive wear and tear of the joints. Osteoarthritis is also sometimes called degenerative joint disease.

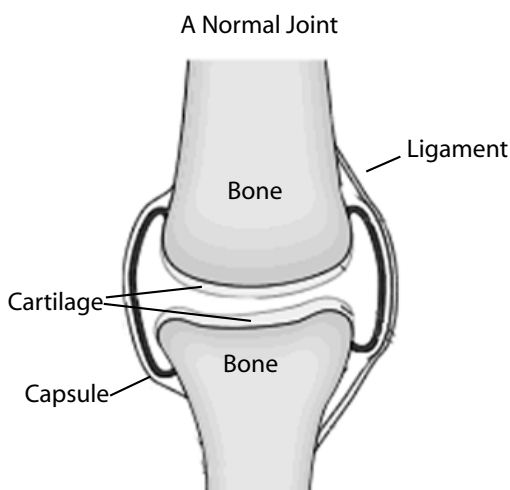
WHAT IS OSTEOARTHRITIS?

Osteoarthritis is a joint disease that mostly affects the cartilage. Cartilage is the slippery tissue that covers the ends of bones in a joint. Healthy cartilage allows bones to glide over one another. It also absorbs the shock of physical movement. Osteoarthritis of the spinal vertebra is referred to as spondylosis, most commonly occurring in the neck region (cervical spondylosis) and low back region (lumbar spondylosis).

In osteoarthritis, the top layer of cartilage breaks down and wears away. When this happens, the bones under the cartilage begin to rub together causing pain, swelling, and loss of motion of the joint. Over time, the joint may lose its normal shape.

When it occurs in the spine, the narrowing may cause nerves to be ‘pinched’, causing pain.

Small bone spurs called osteophytes may also grow on



the edges of the joint. This is a result of the body trying to hold the joint together from excessive movements. The body “thinks” that the joint is wearing out due to the excessive movements isolated to a specific joint, so it grows these spurs in an attempt to better “hold it” together.

Bits of bone or cartilage may break off and float inside the joint space causing more pain and damage. The spurs may also press on to a nerve when growing on the spine, again causing pain.

WHAT CAUSES OSTEOARTHRITIS?

The exact causes the disease is still unknown. However it is believed that it is a result of a combination of factors, including the aging process, joint injury, and stresses on the joints from certain jobs and sports activities.

1. Aging process – cartilage wear and tear due to our daily activities may remain unchanged over time,

but our body's ability to repair them will gradually decrease as we age.

2. Joint stress is a common reason when osteoarthritis occurs in younger people. Conditions such as poor posture and being overweight can cause an excessive amount of stress to be placed on a particular joint, leading to abnormal wear-and-tear.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

Osteoarthritis affects each person differently. People with osteoarthritis usually have joint pain and limited movement. However, there are also cases of people with osteoarthritis who exhibit no symptoms of pain.

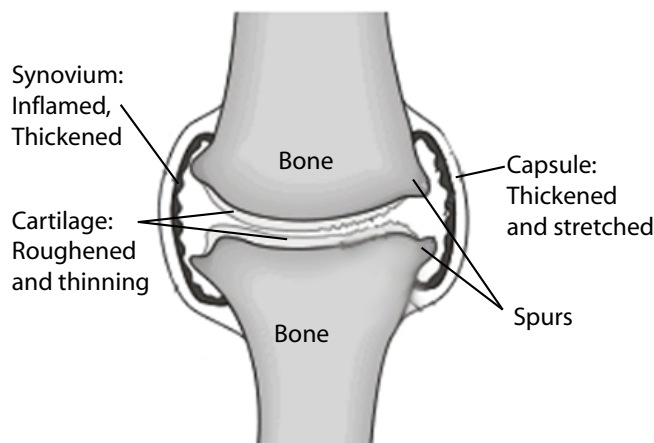
Osteoarthritis can occur in any joint though it most often occurs at the hands, knees, hips, or spine.

TREATMENT

Most successful treatment programmes involve a combination of treatments customised to the patient's needs, lifestyle, and health. Generally, the programmes aim to:

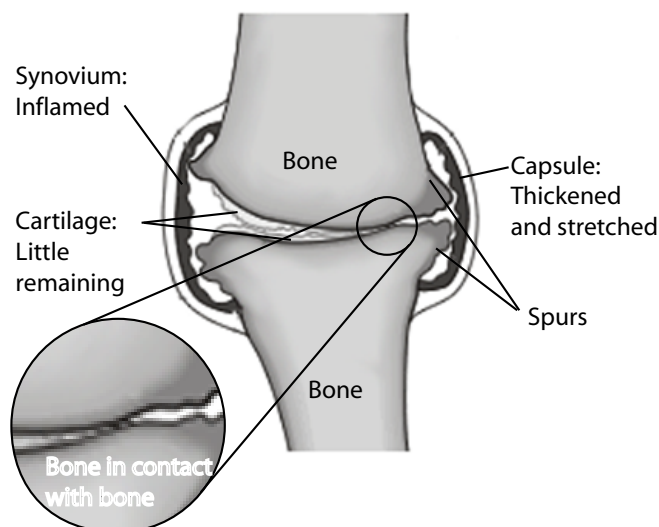
1. Improve joint care through rest and exercise.
2. Maintain an acceptable body weight.
3. Control pain with medicine and other measures.
4. Achieve a healthy lifestyle.

Joint with mild osteoarthritis



Research shows that exercise is one of the best treatments for osteoarthritis. Exercise can improve mood and outlook, decrease pain, increase flexibility, increase strength and stability around the joint, improve the

Joint with severe osteoarthritis



heart and blood flow, maintain weight, and promote general physical fitness.

Exercise also, if done correctly under the supervision of a physiotherapist, has few negative side effects. The amount and form of exercise will depend on which joints are involved and how stable the joints are.