

OSTEOARTHRITIS

WHAT IS OSTEOARTHRITIS?

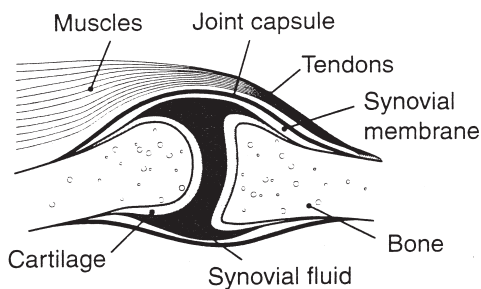
Osteoarthritis (OA) is the most common type of arthritis. It is usually found in older adults. It is sometimes called a degenerative joint disease. This disease mostly affects the cartilage. Cartilage is a smooth material that covers the end of the joint to cushion the bone and allow the joint to move easily. With OA, the surface layer of the cartilage breaks down and wears away. This allows bones to rub together. This can cause pain, swelling, and loss of motion of the joint.



Arthritis

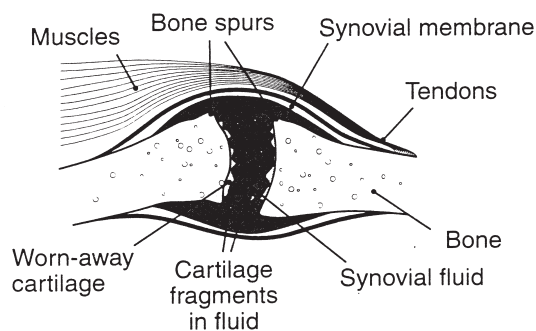
ARTHRITIS
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A Healthy Joint



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.

CAUSE

The exact cause of osteoarthritis is unknown. A combination of things in the body, your lifestyle, and your environment may add to its development. Several factors increase the risk of developing osteoarthritis. These include:

- age,
- being female,
- family history,
- being overweight,
- repetitive motion,
- injury, and
- a defect present at birth.

WARNING SIGNS

Osteoarthritis has several warning signs, including pain. However, not everyone has pain. Only one-third of the people diagnosed with the disease report pain and other warning signs. Warning signs may include:

- Steady or periodic pain in a joint,
- Morning stiffness,
- Joint swelling or tenderness in one or more joints,
- A crunching feeling or sound of bone rubbing on bone.

If you have hot, red, or tender joints, you probably do not have osteoarthritis. Talk to your doctor about other possible causes.

DIAGNOSIS

No single test can diagnose osteoarthritis. Most doctors use a combination of the following methods to find out if you have the disease and to rule out other conditions:

- medical history,
- physical exam
- x-rays, and
- other tests (blood tests, joint fluid).

TREATMENT

Resting the affected joint, losing weight (if overweight) and physical therapy including ice, heat and exercises are often helpful. Mild pain without swelling can often be relieved by acetaminophen. If this does not work, or if there is proof of swelling, over-the-counter or prescription non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs may be used.

Your doctor may recommend a combination of treatments that include:

- rest and joint care,
- pain relief techniques,
- medication,
- exercise,
- weight control.
- alternative therapies, and
- surgery.

For more information contact:
Missouri Arthritis & Osteoporosis Program: 1-800-316-0935
or
Arthritis Foundation: 1-800-283-7800

This publication may be provided in alternative formats such as Braille, large print or audiotape by contacting 1-800-316-0935. TDD users can access the above phone number by calling 1-800-735-2966.

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