



www.arthritis.org
800-283-7800

Living with Osteoarthritis

YOU CAN DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT.

Nearly 21 million people in the United States have **Osteoarthritis** (ah-stee-oh-arthRY-tis), or OA. OA can be serious, but it can be prevented and treated. Many people with OA live happy, healthy lives.

This guide help you learn more about OA.

WHAT IS OSTEOARTHRITIS?

OA is the most common kind of arthritis. It is the form that comes as you get older or after an injury. It causes pain, swelling and stiffness in your joints. If you have OA, it may be harder to use your joints.

OA occurs most often in:

- Knees
- Hips
- Lower back
- Neck
- Small joint of the fingers
- Base of the thumb and big toe

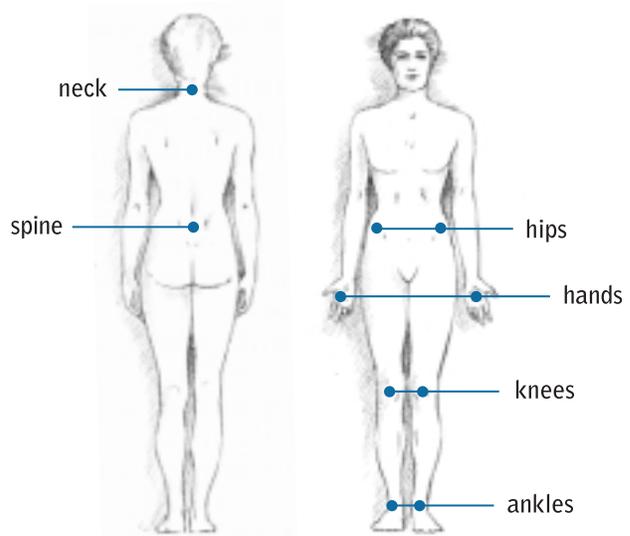
WHAT CAUSES OA?

The cause of OA is not known. However, there are many things that make you more likely to get OA.

Risk factors for OA are:

- Being overweight
- Injury to a joint
- Overuse of a joint
- Weak muscles
- Injury to a nerve
- Having other types of arthritis
- Having family who have arthritis
- Older than 55

If you have two or more of these risk factors, talk to your doctor.



Joints that may be affected by OA.

HOW DOES MY DOCTOR KNOW IF I HAVE OA?

To learn if you have OA, your doctor will need:

- A medical history
- A physical check-up
- X-rays

HOW IS OA TREATED?

There is no cure for OA. But there are medicines and therapies that can help with the pain and swelling. Getting help early is very important.

Good care can help you:

- Feel less joint pain and stiffness
- Move your joints easier
- Do daily activities

Ask your doctor what is best for your OA.

A treatment plan may include:

- Physical therapy
- Occupational therapy
- Exercise
- Weight control
- Medication

HOW DO I KNOW IF I HAVE OA?

You may have OA if:

- Your joints are stiff in the morning.
- Your joints hurt when you move.
- Your joints are painful even when you are inactive.
- You hear crackling sound or have a grating feeling when you move your joints.
- The skin around your joint is red and swollen.

WHAT MEDICINE SHOULD I TAKE?

Your doctor may give you medicine to treat your OA. Some medicines help the swelling and pain in your joints. Other medicines stop or slow the damage to your joints.

You can find other medicines for arthritis at a grocery store or pharmacy. Ask your doctor before taking any of these medicines. They may not work with your type of arthritis. They may not mix well with the other medicines you take. Trust your doctor to know what medicines work best for you.

For more information: The Arthritis Foundation offers a wide variety of books, brochures and videos about different forms of arthritis, treatment and self-management techniques to help you take control of your arthritis. To order any of these products, become an Arthritis Foundation member or to subscribe to the Arthritis Foundation's award-winning consumer health magazine, *Arthritis Today*, call (800) 283-7800. Call or visit our Web site (www.arthritis.org) to find out how you can take control of your arthritis and start living better today!

This brochure has been reviewed by the
AMERICAN COLLEGE OF RHEUMATOLOGY.



MISSION STATEMENT:

The mission of the Arthritis Foundation is to improve lives through leadership in the prevention, control and cure of arthritis and related diseases.



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