

# Osteoarthritis

There are different types of arthritis; here we will be focusing on Osteoarthritis (OA), also known as Degenerative Joint Disease (DJD).

OA is a disease that can affect the joints of the hips, knees, hands, neck and low back, but is not limited to these areas. A joint is anywhere that two bones connect.

Cartilage is a thick, firm, impact-absorbing tissue that lies in between bones to protect the ends of the bones. OA is a progressive loss of cartilage in the joints, which can lead to various symptoms.

## Symptoms of OA:

Symptoms may be generalized or localized, and may include:

*Pain:* Aching, burning or sharp. Pain may improve with activity.

*Stiffness:* Usually occurs when getting out of bed in the morning, after sitting for a while, or after any type of prolonged positioning. Usually improves with activity.

*Muscle weakness:* The muscles surrounding the joint become weaker.

*Swelling:* OA may cause the area to feel tender and sore.

*Joint deformity:* The joints may start to take on a different shape as arthritis worsens.

*Noises:* Your joints may produce cracking or creaking sounds with movement or weight bearing.

## Diagnosis of OA:

The cause of OA is not known, but it has been associated with aging, joint injury (sports, excessive mechanical stress due to lifting, bending or repetitive motion), structural mal-alignment, muscle weakness, and genetics. In order to make a diagnosis of OA, your doctor will ask you questions about your symptoms, such as the type of pain you are having, if you are experiencing stiffness in the morning and how long it lasts, and observing any joint swelling. Your doctor may also perform an X-ray to better visualize the joint and check for damage, as well as blood testing to rule out other causes for your pain.

Changes that can be seen on an X-ray may include joint space narrowing, osteophyte formation (bone spurs), or sclerosis of the bone (hardening, thickening due to increased pressure on the bone).

## Treatment of OA:

Depending on the severity and individual characteristics of your OA, your doctor will determine the best treatment plan for you. Treatment may include over-the-counter medicines such as acetaminophen

(Tylenol), aspirin, ibuprofen (Advil), or naproxen (Aleve). Your doctor may also prescribe a stronger prescription medicine to help relieve your pain, if appropriate.

Heat before activity can help loosen up the area, and cold can be used as a pain reliever after activity or exercise.

Topical gels or creams may also help to temporarily relieve pain, as well.

If you are overweight, weight loss can help to take stress off of your joints.

Exercise can also help to improve muscle strength and in turn reduce stress on the joint. Swimming, bicycling and walking are good forms of low-impact exercises for OA.

Your doctor may recommend that you see a physical therapist, such as at Advanced Physical Therapy, to assess your muscle strength, help decrease pain, and to improve mobility by integrating safe exercises into your daily activity that are individualized and appropriate for your condition.

---

This brochure is compliments of  
**Advanced Physical Therapy & Health Services**

444 N. Northwest Hwy., Suite 202  
Park Ridge, IL 60068  
Phone: 847-268-0280

## Arthritis, continued

Surgery may be an option for severe arthritis of certain joints. For example, a partial or total knee or hip replacement surgery can be performed to insert an artificial joint. This can help to improve joint alignment, pain, and mobility. However, this may not be a good option for all individuals. Your physician will discuss and determine the right treatment options for you.

Not all joint pain is due to Osteoarthritis. There are multiple forms of arthritis (e.g. Rheumatoid Arthritis, Juvenile arthritis), trauma or mechanical injuries, as well as other systemic and metabolic disorders that can mimic symptoms similar to those of OA.

If you are experiencing joint pain, see your doctor for an evaluation to determine the proper treatment of your symptoms.

This brochure is compliments of  
**Advanced Physical Therapy & Health Services**

444 N. Northwest Hwy., Suite 202  
Park Ridge, IL 60068  
Phone: 847-268-0280

[www.apths.com](http://www.apths.com)



is a private, physical therapist-owned outpatient physical therapy clinic specializing in neurologic, orthopedic, and vestibular conditions.

All patients are evaluated by a licensed physical therapist.

We guarantee to see you for an initial evaluation within 24-48 hours.

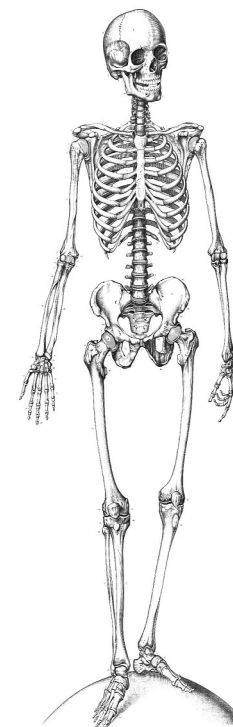
We have early morning and late evening hours for convenient scheduling.

We accept and are in-network with most insurance companies, including PPO's, HMO's, Medicare, Tricare, and Workers' Compensation.

*Conditions we evaluate and treat include, but are not limited to:*

- Neck & back injuries/pain
- Arthritis
- Vertigo
- Sprains/Strains
- Parkinson's Disease
- Fractures
- Multiple Sclerosis
- Tendonitis
- Gait & balance disorders
- Bursitis
- Peripheral neuropathy
- Stroke
- Sports injuries
- Carpal Tunnel Syndrome
- Work-related injuries
- TMJ disorder/pain
- Nerve injuries / disorders
- Joint replacements
- Cervicogenic headaches
- Orthopedic surgeries

Information  
about  
Osteoarthritis



444 N. Northwest Hwy., Suite 202  
Park Ridge, IL 60068  
Phone: 847-268-0280

[www.apths.com](http://www.apths.com)