

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT KNEE OSTEOARTHRITIS

In the Clinic
Annals of Internal Medicine

What Is Knee Osteoarthritis?

- Knee osteoarthritis is a degenerative joint disease that causes cartilage to break down.
- Without cartilage, your bones start to rub together. Over time, this can permanently damage the joint.
- Osteoarthritis causes pain, swelling, and reduced motion in your joints.
- It can occur in other joints besides the knee, such as your hands, hips, or spine.



What Are Risk Factors?

- Getting older
- Being a woman
- Bone deformities, such as malformed joints or defective cartilage
- Joint injuries, such as from playing sports or from an accident
- Being overweight, which puts added stress on your weight-bearing joints
- Working in an occupation that places repetitive stress on a particular joint

- To reduce pain, your doctor may recommend topical or oral pain relievers or cortisone injections.
- Surgery may be used to replace joints.
- Call your doctor if you have fever; red, hot, or swollen joints; more pain than usual; or falls.

How Is It Treated?

- Keep as active as you can.
- Do low-impact exercises you and your doctor agree are right for you. Go to physical therapy if you need to.
- If you are too heavy, try to lose weight. Ask your doctor for help.
- Use canes, braces, and other aids to make it easier to get around if needed.

What Questions Should You Ask Your Doctor?

- Which medicines are best to treat my pain?
- Are there side effects? If so, what are they?
- What should I do if my medicines stop working?
- Will shots into my joints help?
- Will I need surgery on my joints?

For More Information



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Information on exercise from the National Institute on Aging, including a video on the benefits of exercise, tips to stay motivated, and resources for a self-managed exercise plan.
www.nia.nih.gov/health/exercise-and-physical-activity/how-older-adults-can-get-started-exercise

Handout on osteoarthritis from the National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases.
www.niams.nih.gov/Health_Info/Osteoarthritis/default.asp

Instructions on mobility devices and using assistive devices from the National Institutes of Health's MedlinePlus.
<https://medlineplus.gov/mobilityaids.html>
<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000343.htm>