

# Osteoarthritis



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Osteoarthritis is the most common type of arthritic condition which affects about 20 million Americans; it is the leading cause of disability for those over 65. Osteoarthritis is characterized by a loss of the smooth, elastic cartilage that cushions the bones of the joint. As the cushion is worn away, the bones are put under increased stress. This increased mechanical load causes further cartilage destruction and induces new bone growth and some bone reshaping. Then, as you move, these bony changes rub against each other, causing inflammation and pain. The most commonly affected joints include the distal interphalangeal and proximal interphalangeal joints in the hands, thumb carpometacarpal joint, intervertebral disks and zygapophyseal joints in the cervical and lumbar vertebrae, first metatarsophalangeal joint of the foot, hips and knees.

**The progression of osteoarthritis can often be slowed, and in some cases, minimized. Here are four keys to defeating osteoarthritis pain:**

*Stay Lean:* Sometimes just losing excess weight can relieve the pain. Gaining **one** pound puts **four** times more stress on the knee and hip joints, greatly accelerating deterioration. Thus, 10 extra pounds on your frame adds an additional 40 pound burden on those joints.

*Stay Active:* Physically fit people suffer less arthritis pain than people who aren't active. Daily moderate exercise is vital. If you have pain now, swimming is a great non-weight bearing aerobic exercise. Ask your Dr. about a referral for aqua therapy.

*Stay Strong:* Strong muscles help take the weight load off of the joints, limiting cartilage damage. A strong core-abdominal and back muscles- keeps your body stable and balanced.

*Stay Informed:* See a pain management specialist to learn about the latest advances in non-surgical treatment options such as injections, pain medications, and medically supervised exercise programs.

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