

Let's Talk about: Osteoarthritis



ST. PAUL'S HOSPITAL
COMMUNITY FORUMS

What is Osteoarthritis?

Osteoarthritis is a disease that affects joints in the body. It can involve any joint, but usually concerns hands and weight-bearing joints such as hips, knees, feet and spine.

It is a type of arthritis that is caused by the breakdown and eventual loss of the cartilage of one or more joints. Cartilage is a protein substance that serves as a "cushion" between the bones of the joints. Osteoarthritis is also known as degenerative arthritis. Among the over 100 different types of arthritis conditions, osteoarthritis is the most common.

Osteoarthritis by the Numbers:

- It affects 3,000,000 Canadians (50% of people over the age of 65 will have some osteoarthritis).
- It affects men and women equally
- Most people develop osteoarthritis after the age of 45, but it can occur at any age.

Symptoms

Symptoms of osteoarthritis usually develop slowly and worsen with time. They involve the area around the joints and can include:

- Pain in joints
- Stiffness
- Bumps or swelling, especially on fingers and feet
- Loss of flexibility
- Grating sensation when you move the joint.

Inflammation of the cartilage can also stimulate new bone outgrowths (spurs, also referred to as osteophytes) to form around the joints. Or, the cartilage may wear away entirely, and your bones may rub together.

Osteoarthritis may also lead to other problems such as:

- The muscles that hold the joint in place weaken because they are not being used.
- Over time, the joint can lose its shape and not work at all.

Causes

Most cases of osteoarthritis have no known cause. However, there are several factors that may increase your risk for getting osteoarthritis including age, excess weight, joint injury, joint abnormalities, genetic factors and damage from other types of joint disease.

Join medical experts from Providence Health Care for monthly community forums at St. Paul's Hospital. Each month features a different health topic with time to pose questions to the experts.

The forums are free and take place the third Wednesday of every month.

7:00 – 9:00 pm
(doors open at 6:30)
New Lecture Theatre
St. Paul's Hospital
1081 Burrard Street

For more information and to register, please email ownyourhealth@providencehealth.bc.ca or call 604-806-8495.

This evening's presentation will be available to view on our website:

www.phcmedicine.ca

Source:
The Arthritis Society of Canada,
www.arthritis.ca



Research and Treatment at St. Paul's Hospital

A unique provincial resource, Providence Health Care provides complete care for British Columbians with Osteoarthritis.

Just as important as the high-quality care we provide is our teaching and research mandate that helps us better understand this condition, improve patient care and develop new treatment solutions.

Members of the Division of Rheumatology at St. Paul's Hospital are actively involved in outreach clinics around British Columbia as well as with the Arthritis Research Centre.

Treatment

There is no cure for osteoarthritis but a lot can be done to help manage the condition. A variety of treatments can help to lessen pain and stiffness and to make movement easier.

Excess weight puts extra stress on the weight-bearing joints, especially the knees and hips. Losing weight, even just 10 pounds (4.5 kilograms), can make you feel better.

Moderate stretching exercises will help relieve the pain and keep the muscles and tendons around the joints more flexible and strong. Low-impact exercises like swimming, walking, and water aerobics can all reduce pain while maintaining strength and flexibility.

Using helpful devices, such as canes, luggage carts, grocery carts and reaching aids, can help make daily tasks easier. Using grab bars and shower seats in the bathroom can help you to conserve energy and avoid falls.

Medications

To control pain and reduce inflammation, the use of all medications, including over-

the-counter drugs and "naturopathic" remedies should be discussed with your doctor prior to use. Analgesics, nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) and topical creams / gels can be taken to help reduce the pain. (NSAIDs) can also help to reduce the swelling of the joints, and decrease stiffness. However, none of these will prevent further damage to the joint areas.

Corticosteroid injections may also be an option to reduce pain and improve mobility. It can be injected into the joints and can provide almost immediate relief for an inflamed joint. However, this treatment can only be used rarely, since corticosteroids can weaken the cartilage and remove the minerals from the bone, resulting in further joint weakness.

Viscosupplementation

Viscosupplementation is a relatively new treatment in Canada for people with osteoarthritis of the knee. A clear gel-like substance is injected into the knee that helps to lubricate joint cartilage and absorb the mechanical shocks of daily living. Viscosupplementation restores frictionless movement within the joint, thus reducing pain and allowing greater mobility.

Surgery

Minor surgery (called arthroscopic surgery) can be performed to clean out cartilage debris from the joints, particularly the knee. Severely damaged joints can be reconstructed or surgically replaced with artificial ones. Joint replacement is major surgery, and is most often performed to replace hip and knee joints. Artificial joints can last 10-20 years before they require replacement, which is why this type of surgery is delayed until it is clearly necessary.

St. Paul's Hospital is an acute care, teaching and research hospital located in downtown Vancouver. It is home to many world-class medical and surgical programs, including heart and lung services, HIV/AIDS and kidney care.

St. Paul's serves both the local community and patients from across BC and the Yukon. St. Paul's is one of 14 health care facilities in Vancouver operated by Providence Health Care, one of Canada's largest faith-based health care organizations. Providence's 1,000 physicians and 6,000 staff deliver compassionate care to patients and residents in British Columbia while training medical professionals and making innovative advances in research.

To support programs like this at St. Paul's Hospital, please visit www.helpstpauls.com to make a donation to the Department of Medicine Academic Fund.

www.phcmedicine.ca