

Osteoarthritis

Osteoarthritis is a common disease affecting the joints that happens to almost everybody as they get older. Around 8 out of 10 people over the age of 50 suffer from osteoarthritis. Osteoarthritis is caused by the wearing down of cartilage in the joints of the body, osteoarthritis causes varying degree of pain, stiffness and swelling. Osteoarthritis may be found in any joint, although the knees, fingers, hips and spine are most commonly affected. Although osteoarthritis can be a painful condition, there is prevention and copy strategies that can help those afflicted with the disease remain active and enjoy a good quality of life.

Treatment

While osteoarthritis treatment depends on the main joints affected, treatment plans will often include medication and exercise.

Medication

There are several medicine groups that can be used in a treatment plan.

Analgesics

Analgesics help in pain reduction and are advised against severe pain. A negative side effect of the medicine is that a patient will depend on it for his daily vital activities.

Anti-inflammatory drugs

Anti-inflammatory drugs target decreasing joint inflammation and pain. In the past, using these drugs for long periods of time could cause stomach problems. Nowadays there are some anti-inflammatory medicines that are safe and do not cause harmful side effects on the stomach, such as Diacerien capsules.

Topical medications

Topical medications are a group of creams and ointments that are applied on the infected joint to decrease pain and improve mobility. Topical creams have no side effects; an example of a topical cream is Moov massage.

Cartilage Protection Medicines

These are medicines that help slow down the demolition of cartilage, while at the same time helping to restore it. Cartilage protection medicines help to decrease pain and improve motion range, while having little side effects. Examples of this are Glucosamine capsules and Genuphil capsules. It must be noted however that these medicines should be used for a long period of time to get the best results.

Lifestyle Changes

- **Exercise** such as walking, cycling and swimming will help strengthen the muscles and maintain joint flexibility. Light and daily exercise is preferred over infrequent and intensive exercise, as the latter might cause too much stress on the body.
- **Being overweight** places an additional burden on the joints and may lead to increased pain. Reaching a healthy weight will help reduce the extra stress on the body, and prevent a number of other diseases
- **Protecting your joints** by avoiding excess stress on them, i.e. by standing for long periods of time, lifting heavy objects, or using the stairs. Once the osteoarthritis is developed, you can purchase a cane to help you cope in daily life.