



Let's Talk About Arthritis

You may have heard different things from your friends or from family members about arthritis. For example, you may have heard that arthritis is an old person's disease or that it is caused by cold or wet weather or by changes between hot and cold.

The truth is that...

- arthritis can affect people at any age, even children can get arthritis
- arthritis can affect people in all types of climates, warm or cold

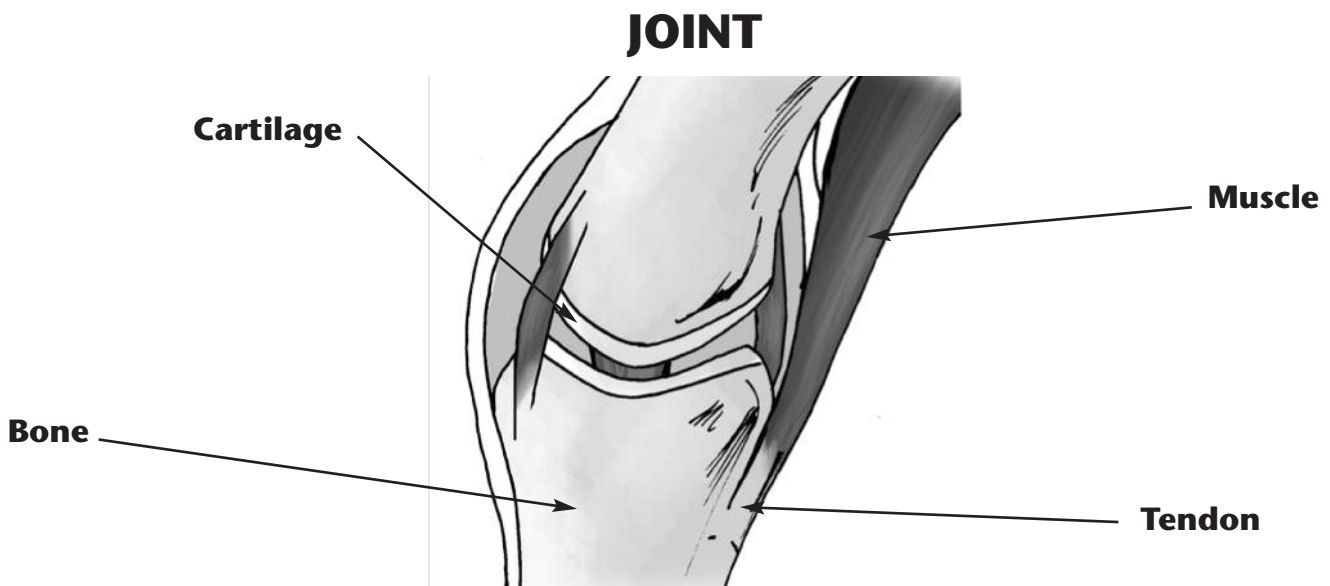
Even though arthritis is a disease that affects more than 50 million people in the United States, people still have many ideas about this disease that are not true. So, let's learn the basics about arthritis.

What is arthritis?

There are more than 100 different types of arthritis. Each of these diseases has different causes, symptoms, and treatments. This means that in general, arthritis happens when there is a problem in the joint.

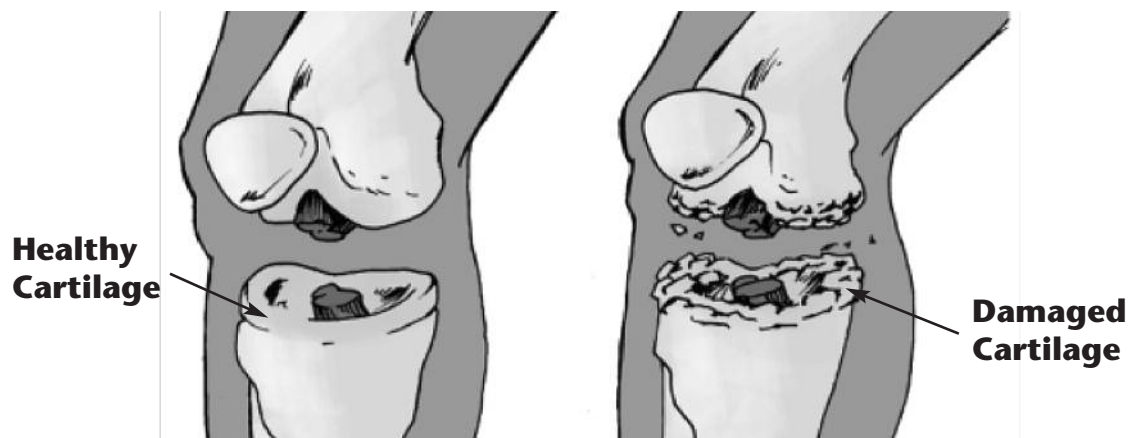
Joints are where two or more bones meet. Joints are everywhere in our body. There are big ones, like the hips and knees, and small ones, like the ones in the toes and fingers.

Arthritis is a disease that cannot be cured.



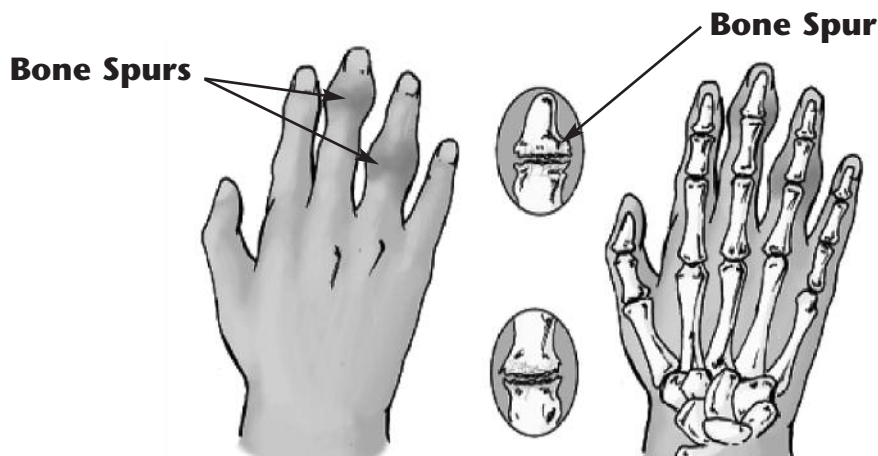
What is the most common type of arthritis?

Osteoarthritis is the most common type of arthritis. In a healthy body, the bones in a joint should not touch each other. Between the bones, there is a firm, slippery tissue that covers the ends of the bones, called cartilage. This cartilage helps the bones move smoothly and acts as a cushion for the bones. When a person has osteoarthritis, *the cartilage of the bone wears down*.



The cartilage can wear away so much that the ends of the bones no longer have any cushioning between them and they rub together. This causes pain and swelling.

Over time, the shape of the joint may change. New pieces of bone can grow on the bones. These are called bone spurs. This is why some people with osteoarthritis have lumps in their joints, like in their hands.



What are some common symptoms of Osteoarthritis?

A person with osteoarthritis:

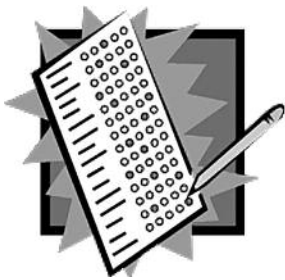
- feels stiff when they first wake up or when they have been in the same position for a long time
- feels joint pain, usually after using the joints too much or too little
- may have swelling in one or more joints

If you feel any of these symptoms, talk with your doctor. No matter how obvious it may seem that you may have osteoarthritis, your doctor is the only one who can give you the right diagnosis.



Are you at Risk of Getting Osteoarthritis?

Anyone can get osteoarthritis, but some people have a higher risk of developing osteoarthritis than others. If you want to find out if you are at risk, get a pen, and answer the following questions.



Take the Quiz!

Questions

1. Are you over 40 years old?
2. Do you have a brother, sister, mother, or father that has arthritis now or had it in the past?
3. Are you 10 or more pounds overweight?
4. Have you ever had a serious injury on one or more joints before?
5. Do you do any of the following things over and over again?
 - Move, lift or carry heavy objects
 - Squat, bend, or kneel
 - Walk over rough ground
 - Work in uncomfortable positions
 - Sit or stand on heavy machinery

Answers

- Yes No
- Yes No
- Yes No
- Yes No
- Yes No



What do your answers mean?

If you answered **YES** to any of these questions, you are at a higher risk of developing osteoarthritis.



Why could you be at risk?

Question #1. Age: Osteoarthritis usually develops in people who are over 40 years old. This can happen because over time, the cartilage can wear down on its own.

HEALTH TIPS



Question #2. Heredity: If you have family members who have osteoarthritis, then you are more likely to develop it too.



Question #3. Being overweight or obese: When you are 10 or more pounds overweight you put more stress on the joints that hold your weight. Over time, this extra weight will cause damage to the joints.



Question #4. A joint injury in the past: Some people may develop osteoarthritis after having an injury to a joint.



Question #5. Using joints over and over: Some jobs can put a lot of stress on certain joints, especially when you are using the same joint over and over again. This can increase the risk of developing osteoarthritis.



What else can put you at risk?

Your gender: Osteoarthritis affects both men and women, but it is more common in women, especially after age 55.

Having weak muscles: People with weak thigh muscles may be more likely to develop osteoarthritis in the knee.

Having other forms of arthritis: For example, having rheumatoid arthritis can increase your chances of developing osteoarthritis.

Having been born with a joint deformity or weak cartilage: A person born with weak cartilage or a deformity in the joints is more likely to develop osteoarthritis.

Although you cannot change your age or gender, there are some things you can do to reduce your risk of developing osteoarthritis. So let's learn about exercise and how to correctly use your joints to protect your body from arthritis.



A Publication of the National Center for Farmworker Health

HEALTH TIPS

Consejos de Salud

Keep Your Body Moving!

"Hi everyone! My name is Andres. I am a physical therapist at the Community Health Center. Thank you for coming today to our exercise workshop for patients with arthritis. Let's start with some of your questions."

Carolina: I always heard you should not exercise when you have arthritis. Is that true?

Andres: Many people used to think that, but now doctors know that exercise can help improve your arthritis symptoms.

Pedro: How does exercise help?

Andres: In many ways. For example, exercise can:

- help the cartilage in the joints stay lubricated
- reduce joint pain and stiffness
- keep the joints moving better and make it easier to stretch and bend
- make the muscles around the joints stronger
- help prevent more damage to the joints
- help control your weight

Exercise can also make you feel better in general! It will reduce stress, pain and you will sleep better!

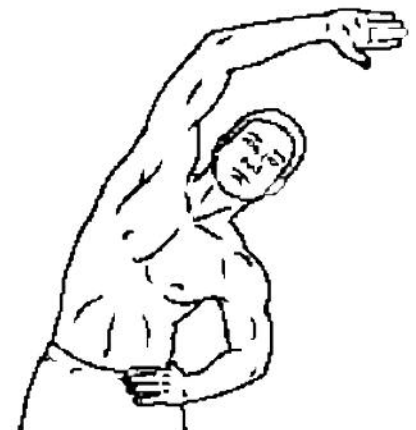
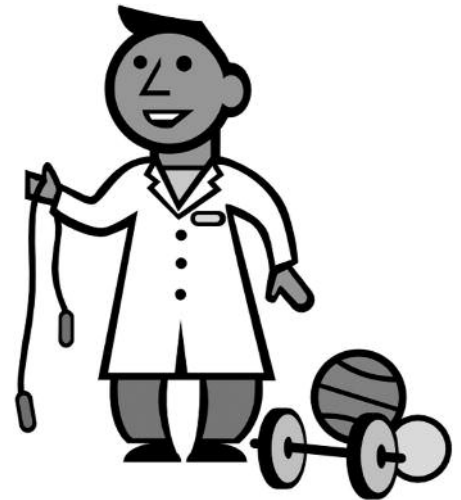
Berta: So, what kinds of exercises are good for arthritis?

Andres: There are three different types of exercises that can help you when you have arthritis. They are *flexibility*, *strengthening*, and *endurance* exercises. I will show you some examples of each type of exercise and tell you how they help your body.

Flexibility Exercises

Flexibility exercises help keep your joints moving, relax the muscles, and warm them up. Try doing this:

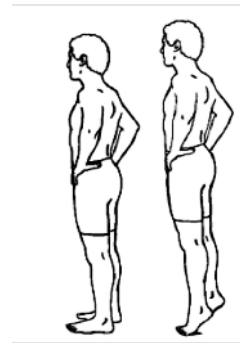
- Raise one arm over your head and stretch to the opposite side until you feel the stretch.
- Hold 15 seconds.
- Switch to the other side and repeat.
- Repeat 5-10 times for each side stretch.



Strengthening Exercises

These types of exercises help you keep or improve your ability to do your everyday activities like walking, climbing stairs, and carrying objects. They also help prevent falls and keep joints moving. Here are two examples:

- Stand up straight. Rise up and stand on your toes.
- Hold for 15 seconds.
- Repeat 5-10 times per set. Do 2-3 sets per session.



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- Extend one leg out and cross the opposite leg on top and around the extended leg
 - Use the "crossed" leg to gently push down
 - Hold for 15 seconds. Switch to the opposite side and repeat
 - Repeat 5-10 times for each side



Endurance Exercises

Endurance exercises use the large muscles of the body. They help make your heart and lungs strong so that you can do things for a longer period of time. Endurance exercises include:

- biking
- jogging
- swimming
- walking
- dancing



Andres: You can also find other types of exercise routines at the **Arthritis Foundation** website.

Their website is: <http://www.arthritistoday.org/what-you-can-do/staying-active/exercise-routines/>

To learn what exercise programs
are available near you, call
the Arthritis Foundation at the following number:
1-800-283-7800



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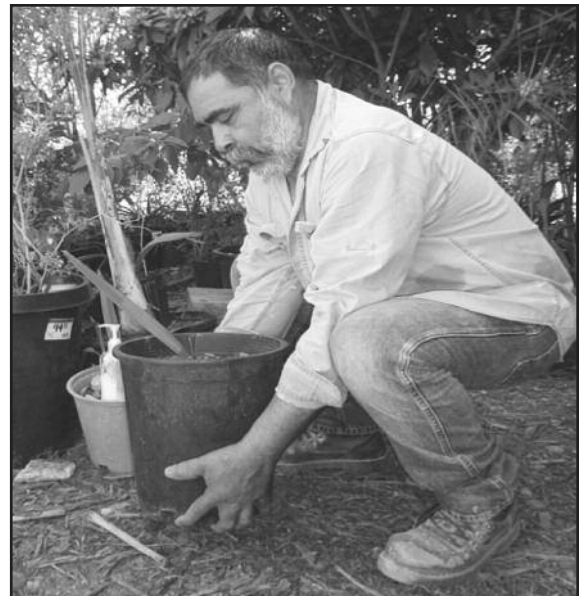
Protect Your Joints Always!

Whether you are doing yard work, fixing your car, or working in construction or in a farm, it is very important that you protect your joints. If what you do at work or at home requires you to kneel or squat, pick or lift objects, carry loads, climb stairs or stand up for more than an hour a day, then your chances of developing osteoarthritis is high.

So protect your joints as much as you can. Here are some useful tips for protecting your joints when doing different types of work. Consider following these tips even if you do not have osteoarthritis.

When picking up or lifting objects:

- Use the knees, not the back, when bending down to pick up an object.
- Hold the object close to your body. Holding the object away from the body puts more pressure on the back, arms, and hands.
- While lifting the object, spread the feet apart from each other by one foot. Put one foot a little ahead of the other to keep your balance.
- Do not lift anything higher than the shoulders.



When carrying loads:

- Use the palms of both hands while carrying the load. Do not use the fingers.
- For heavy loads, ask for help from a coworker. If nobody is around, divide the load to be lighter. Another option is to carry heavy loads by using a dolly.



When climbing stairs or equipment:

- Go up the stairs/equipment using the stronger leg first.
- Go down the stairs/equipment using the weaker leg first. This way the stronger leg can support the body weight.
- Do not jump on and off the equipment.



When standing up for long periods:

- Stand up with one foot higher than the other one. To put one foot higher, use a little box. Change position after a while.
- If possible, stand up on something that has cushion like a mat or a piece of carpet.



When kneeling or squatting:

- Sit on a low stool or small chair.
- Stand up and stretch every 20 minutes.



Remember, there is no cure for osteoarthritis but it is possible to slow down the disease and make your symptoms better. The best thing you can do is to keep your body moving and protect your joints!