

Health Facts: *Osteoarthritis*



Prevention Tips

Osteoarthritis, sometimes called degenerative joint disease, affects structures throughout the joint. The cartilage, the slippery tissue that covers the ends of bones in a joint, begins to break down and wear away. This allows bones to rub together, eventually causing inflammation and pain. It affects women more often than men. Age is also a risk factor. Some younger people get osteoarthritis from a joint injury, but osteoarthritis most often occurs in people over 40. Researchers suspect that genes play a role in some cases of osteoarthritis.

While many osteoarthritis risk factors—being female, older and having other diseases that affect the bones and joints—cannot be changed, you can work on several risk factors to lower your risk of developing the condition:

- **Obesity.** Losing extra weight and exercising can help people with osteoarthritis. Most importantly, weight loss may reduce the risk of developing osteoarthritis of the knee in overweight or obese people.
- **On-the-job injuries.** Taking precautions to avoid repetitive joint use and resulting joint injury in the occupational setting can help prevent osteoarthritis.
- **Sports injuries.** Using recommended prevention strategies (warm-ups, strengthening exercises and appropriate equipment) helps to avoid joint injuries and damage to ligaments and cartilage, all of which can increase your risk of osteoarthritis.

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