

SPEAKING OF... HIP OSTEOARTHRITIS (OA)

The most common form of hip arthritis among older people is osteoarthritis, or Hip OA. Wear and tear over time can lead to OA in the hip joint, often after middle age. The cartilage that covers the hip bone (the ball) and the pelvis (the socket) wears down, and the bones rub against each other. The cartilage cannot heal itself so there is pain in the hip that can get worse with time. You may start to limp to lighten the pain. There might be stiffness in the hip, and it might become hard to move after sitting for a long time, or in the morning after sleeping.

How does OA happen? OA of the hip mostly affects older adults. If you are overweight, this could put stress on your hip joint. If you have had a hip injury or accident, this can lead to OA. Some diseases such as lupus, septic arthritis, or sickle cell anemia can be a risk for OA later in life. OA will get worse over time due to wear and tear. It is best to see a doctor or nurse practitioner soon if there is pain or stiffness in the hip so treatment can begin.

Treatment for Hip OA: Your doctor may first have you make changes in your lifestyle to relieve

the pain and help the stiffness. This could slow the disease and protect your hip joint.

-Instead of sports or running, there is less stress on the hip with walking, cycling and swimming. These are called low-impact exercises.

-If you are overweight, losing just a few pounds can lower the amount of stress and pain in your hip.

-Physical Therapy (PT) can help lessen pain and make the muscles that support your hip stronger. PT can also help the range of motion for your hip.

-A cane, crutches, or walker could ease your pain and help you stay independent. A long-handled reacher to pick up low-lying things could help lessen pain from bending over.

If your pain gets worse, or affects your daily routine, tell your doctor or nurse practitioner. There are medications that might help. These include pills that do not require a prescription (over the counter), pain pills that need a prescription, or a shot with cortisone into the hip. It is very important to discuss your pain with your doctor.

Speaking Of... is a free education series from the National Association of Orthopaedic Nurses (NAON) about medical conditions of bones and joints, in plain language



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