

SPEAKING OF... OSTEOARTHRITIS (OA)

The most common form of arthritis among older people is osteoarthritis, or OA. Millions of people around the world have OA. It affects both men and women and is one of the most frequent causes of physical disability in older adults. It occurs when the cartilage that covers the bone and joint wears down over time. Sometimes, all of the cartilage wears away, and the bones rub against each other.

Could you have OA? OA mostly affects people as they get older. Some people are more likely to get OA than others. More women have OA than men. Some people inherit a tendency for OA. Being overweight can be a reason for OA because of the extra stress to the body, especially hips and knees. Joint injuries from sports or an accident may make OA more likely, even if it was a long time ago. If a job or sport puts too much stress on a joint, it could lead to OA of that joint.

OA Symptoms. The most common signs are stiffness and pain, but not everyone with OA feels pain. The pain may be mild but it could get worse.

Other common signs are swelling and tenderness. There could be stiffness after getting out of bed, or getting up from a chair. Common joints are the hands, knees, hips, feet, and spine. There could be a crunching feeling or sound of bone rubbing on bone. Damage to joints cannot be reversed.

Help for OA. If you have joint pain or stiffness that won't stop, call or see your doctor or nurse practitioner. OA symptoms can usually be managed. Staying active and keeping a healthy weight can help. Treatment with medications and/or therapy might slow the disease and improve pain and movement.

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



NAON
National Association of
Orthopaedic Nurses

This document is for informational purposes only and does not provide medical advice.