



Information for Patients & Caregivers

What you need to know about
Osteoarthritis?

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Osteoarthritis is the most common form of arthritis and a leading cause of disability in the adult population worldwide.

+ WHAT IS OSTEOARTHRITIS?

Osteoarthritis (OA) is a painful disease that can affect one or more joints.

The point where two bones meet within a joint is normally covered by a smooth elastic tissue, rubbery-like padding called cartilage. This tissue allows the bones to slide over each without causing pain.

However, as OA develops the cartilage breaks down causing the bones to rub against each other causing pain. Osteoarthritis is commonly found in the knees, hips, back, neck, and hands.

OA can affect both women and men. It often occurs in middle age or older people.

Symptoms of OA can vary from one person to another, but the key symptoms are:

- Joint pain (sudden or slowly developing).
- Stiffness of the joint.
- Reduced function of the joint.

Other possible symptoms include:

- Swelling of the joints.
- Changes in joint shape.
- Muscle weakness.
- Poor balance and problems walking if a knee or hip is badly affected.

These symptoms usually worsen with activity and improve with rest.

Other diseases that cause joint pain may be mistaken for OA. You should see a doctor to get the cot.

+ WHAT CAUSES OSTEOARTHRITIS?

Several factors can increase the risk of developing osteoarthritis and most people with the disease have one or more of these factors:

- **Older age.** This is one of the strongest risk factors for OA.
- **Gender.** Women are 2-3 times more likely than men to develop OA and are more likely to have pain if it does develop.
- **Obesity.** Obese people are at high risk of developing OA. Losing weight may reduce this risk.
- **Occupation.** Certain jobs may increase your risk of OA. Examples include firefighting, construction work and professional sports.
- **Injury.** Repetitive joint injury or trauma to a specific joint.
- **Poor diet.** Such as mineral and vitamin deficiencies.



+ WHEN SHOULD I SEE A DOCTOR?

Getting a diagnosis of OA is the first step in ensuring appropriate treatment. You should see a doctor if you have any of the following symptoms:

- **Joint pain** that is worse with activity and relieved by rest.
- **Morning joint stiffness** or stiffness that recurs during periods of inactivity.
- **Crackling or grating** sensation in your joint.
- **Swelling or deformity** in a joint.



+ WHAT YOUR DOCTOR WILL DO?

To make a diagnosis of OA, your doctor will take a medical history and perform a physical examination. If the symptoms and signs suggest you have OA, your doctor may order some tests such as joint imaging and blood tests to further confirm the diagnosis.

Once the diagnosis of OA is made, your doctor will discuss the different treatment options and develop an appropriate treatment plan with you based on your medical status and preference.



+ HOW IS OSTEOARTHRITIS TREATED?

There is no cure for osteoarthritis but there are several measures that can be taken to ease symptoms. The overall goals of treatment are to:

- Help you to understand the disease and how to manage it.
- Minimise pain and stiffness.
- Improve the mobility of your affected joints.
- Limit any joint damage or disability.
- Minimise any side-effects from medicines used as a treatment:

You do not have to live with pain or disability. Various treatments may help and include:

- **Weight loss.** If you are overweight, try to lose some weight to reduce the extra burden placed on the joints.
- **Regular exercise.** This will help to strengthen the muscles around affected joints and to maintain a good range of joint movement.
- **Physiotherapy.** Your doctor may refer you to a physiotherapist for treatment to strengthen the muscles around the affected joints.
- **Walking aids and devices.** You may be referred to an occupational therapist for advice on walking aids or other devices and modifications to your home to cope with any disability caused by OA.
- **Pain-relief medicines.** Such as analgesics and anti-inflammatory pain-killer pills. Your doctor will prescribe appropriate pain-relief medicines and discuss their potential side-effects with you.

+ PREVENTING OSTEOARTHRITIS

It is not possible to prevent osteoarthritis altogether. However, you may be able to minimise the risk of developing the disease by:

- **Avoiding injury** and staying as healthy as possible.
- **Maintaining a healthy weight** range to reduce the burden of osteoarthritis if developed in a weight-bearing joint.
- **Maintaining a good posture** always and avoid staying in the same position for too long. If you work at a desk, make sure your chair is at the correct height, and take regular breaks to move around.
- **Avoiding repeated joint motions**, especially frequent bending.
- **Keeping your muscles strong.** Your muscles help support your joints. Doing regular exercise for at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity every week will help build up your muscle strength.
- **Controlling your blood sugar** if you are diabetic. High blood sugar levels can speed up the formation of certain materials that make cartilage stiffer and more sensitive to mechanical stress.
- **Following a healthy diet** enriched with sufficient nutrients and minerals. A Mediterranean diet may also provide some benefits in the prevention of osteoarthritis-related bone or muscle problems.

IMPORTANT TIP:

Some pain relief medicines interact with the effects of other medications.

Talk to your doctor before taking other medicines, especially if you have other long-standing conditions such as stomach ulcer, hypertension, or diabetes.

+ FOLLOW UP

You should attend your follow-up appointments regularly to ensure that your symptoms and medications are properly monitored by the doctor.

Continue to take your medicines as advised by your doctor and ask about the side effects of the medicines prescribed to you, and whether there are any activities you need to avoid.

If you have undergone surgery for osteoarthritis, you may need to see your doctor more frequently after surgery.

You may be able to resume low-impact sports activities when your strength, mobility, and balance are regained. However, you should ask your doctor about when you can resume normal activities after surgery.

TOP-TIP:

If you are diagnosed with OA, it is important that:

- You follow a healthy lifestyle.
- Diet, exercise, sleep, managing stress and whether you smoke, or drink can have a tremendous effect on your overall health, and the health of your joints.

+ ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Additional information on osteoarthritis can be found in the National Clinical Guideline published by The Ministry of Public Health (MOPH) Qatar.

The Guideline is available to the public from the MOPH website: www.moph.gov.qa