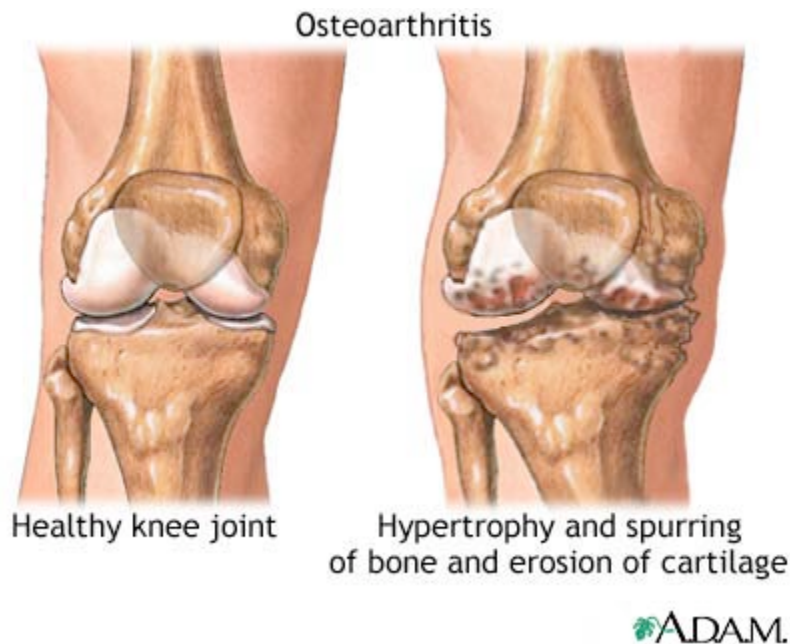


Managing Osteoarthritis With Exercise

Arthritis means “inflammation of a joint”. Osteoarthritis is a degenerative joint disease. It is also one of the oldest and most common forms of arthritis. Osteoarthritis affects about 27 million Americans over the age of 25. Unlike rheumatoid arthritis (inflammatory disease), a degenerative joint disease stays localized in the affected joint. Osteoarthritis is characterized by a progressive loss of cartilage – mostly in hands, spine, hips, and knees. This breakdown removes the buffer between bones causing a bone against bone friction. The result of this degeneration is joint pain, swelling, limited range of motion, and stiffness. As the opposing cartilage surfaces wear away, the knee collapses causing deformities such as being bowlegged (varus) or knock kneed (valgus). These deformities can contribute to pain and functional losses of the knee.



How does osteoarthritis develop?

The various factors that cause the development and progression of osteoarthritis include the following risk factors:

- *Genetics
- * Joint injuries (sports, accidents, work-related)
- *Obesity
- *Ageing

Osteoarthritis should be diagnosed by your doctor and X-rays can confirm the condition.

Can exercise help?

The short answer is “yes”. Vigorous exercise, jogging or running if the hip or knee is involved, is not recommended. Instead, select low-impact or non-impact activities - walking, elliptical, swimming, or biking. Wearing shock-absorbing shoes or using a cane can be helpful tools. In the recent past, flexibility exercises were the standard recommendation to help maintain or improve joint mobility. The goal of improving flexibility is still vital, but muscle exercises to improve strength are also recommended. Your physician, physical therapist, or trainer can instruct you on the proper use of equipment (tubing, weights, isometric exercise). Flexibility exercises are most beneficial if done daily. Depending on your current fitness condition, strength training and cardiovascular training should progress gradually. Switch routines regularly so that the joints are stressed from different angles and with different intensities.

Alternative Treatment Choices

- *Anti-inflammatory drugs
- *Heat and cold therapies
- *Weight management
- *Surgery (multiple types and options)
- *Partial or total knee replacement (only used when severe osteoarthritis is present)

Additional Resources for Information

Arthritis Foundation – www.arthritis.org/conditions/exercise/default.asp

John Hopkins Arthritis Center – www.hopkins-arthritis.som.jhmi.edu/mngmnt/exercise.html

Medline Plus – Arthritis: www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/arthritis.html

Cindy Pavell, M.S.

Health Educator & Fitness Specialist

www.fitnesspluswellness.com

703-298-8198