

## Understanding Osteoarthritis (OA)

### What is Osteoarthritis?

Osteoarthritis (OA) is a common, degenerative joint condition where the cartilage that cushions your joints breaks down over time. OA commonly affects the knees, hips, hands and spine. This “wear and tear” causes the bones to rub against each other, leading to pain, stiffness, and reduced mobility.

- Symptoms include joint aches during or after movement, stiffness, reduced range of motion, and increased discomfort with inactivity. As well as, catching or clicking of the joint, and joint swelling.
- OA can affect anyone at any age. Symptoms can come and go, and it is common to experience good and bad days.
- OA often presents as a cycle where less movement leads to more stiffness, which increases pain and results in even less movement. Breaking this cycle with regular, appropriate activity is key to managing your symptoms
- While OA doesn't have a cure, it is highly manageable. With the right approach and personalized strategies, you can live actively and confidently.

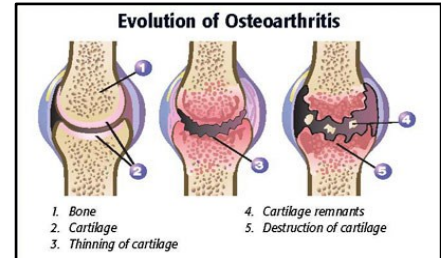


Image: Home Physio Group

### Testing and Diagnosis

- Both a physical examination and your genetic background can help guide the assessment of OA.
- X-rays assess the severity (mild, moderate, severe) and help track progression (MRI not required).

### Living with an OA Diagnosis

- Surgery is not the only solution and is often not the first step.
- You can build a personalized plan to maintain your lifestyle and continue the activities you love.



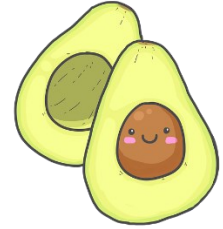
### Management Strategies

#### 1. Stay Active: Movement Is Medicine

- Regular, varied movement helps reduce pain, improve joint function, and support mental well-being. Consider trying:
  - Strength, balance, and mobility training
  - Low-impact activities (e.g., walking, cycling, swimming, water aerobics) are beneficial; high-impact activities (e.g., running, jumping, plyometrics) should be limited.
  - Physiotherapy and personalized programs can guide and adapt your plan; education and exercise programs like GLA:D are excellent resources.

## 2. Maintain a Healthy Body Weight

- A healthy body weight can reduce stress on the affected joint.
- Aim for consistent, balanced, anti-inflammatory meals focusing on high protein, healthy fats, and mostly unprocessed foods
- Nutrition also supports energy, healing, and joint protection.



## 3. Build a Support Team

- Building a strong support team, combined with understanding and effective treatment, can make a significant difference in managing your OA.
- Understand how factors like your genetics, sex (e.g., menopause in females), and lifestyle choices may affect your OA progression and management.

## Pain Management

### 1. Non-Medical Approaches

- Explore massage therapy, acupuncture, and mind-body practices like yoga, Tai Chi
- Consider functional aids to relieve stress on your joints:
  - Supportive, comfortable footwear, knee sleeves or patellar (kneecap) stabilization braces, custom off-loader knee braces (for medial, lateral, and anterior compartments), walking sticks, or hiking poles.

### 2. Medical Management

- NSAIDs (anti-inflammatory drugs) can help during flare ups. \*\*\*AVOID NSAIDs if you have kidney or blood pressure issues.
  - Pills: Ibuprofen, Naproxen, Celebrex, Arthrotec, or Vimovo
  - Creams: Voltaren, 10% Diclofenac (prescription)
- Injections: Corticosteroids, hyaluronic acid (HA), or PRP may be considered depending on your specific needs. Discuss these options with your physician.

### 3. Surgical Options *(Only when necessary)*

- Arthroscopy: Minimally invasive clean-up procedure.
- Joint realignment (e.g., High Tibial Osteotomy): Changes stress points on the joint.
- Total joint replacement (Arthroplasty): For advanced OA, the damaged joint is replaced with artificial components.

## For more information

Our team strongly recommends that all patients watch these informative videos. They can answer many of your questions about OA and help you prepare any additional questions for our team.

To watch:

- Scan the QR code
- Click on this link: <https://banffsportmed.ca/osteoarthritis/>

