

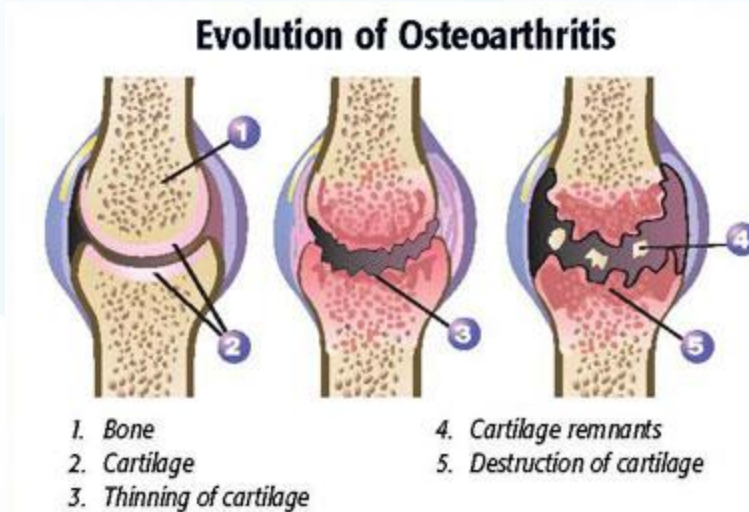
Degenerative Joint Disease

One of the main forms of this condition is referred to as osteoarthritis, which affects millions of individuals around the world. This condition occurs when the protective cartilage at the ends of the bones end up wearing down over the course of time. Even though the condition can damage any of the joint in your body, it most often affects the joints of the hands, lower back, neck, knees and hips.

Over the course of time, it will get worse, especially if it is not managed properly. At the present time, there is no cure for the condition, but treatments can help to slow down the progression of the disease, improve function in the joints and relieve pain.

Degenerative Joint Disease Anatomy

Degeneration of the joint cartilage is often accompanied by an overgrowth of the bone, sclerosis, narrow joint space, joint deformity and hardening of the bone at the surface of the joint. Most of the time, the condition is not associated with inflammation, even though swelling will often occur with the condition.



How to Treat Degenerative Joint Disease:

1. Acetaminophen

Even though Tylenol is amazing for relieving pain, it doesn't help with eliminating inflammation. It has been proven to be effective for those who have osteoarthritis with mild to moderate pain. Avoid taking more than the recommended dose to prevent liver damage.

2. Anti-Inflammatory Medication

An anti-inflammatory medication will help to relieve pain and reduce inflammation. An over-the-counter medication like ibuprofen and naproxen will work well for treating the inflammation and pain. Stronger prescriptions can cause ringing in the ears, upset stomach, bleeding problems and others, so they should be taken with caution.

3. Physical Therapy

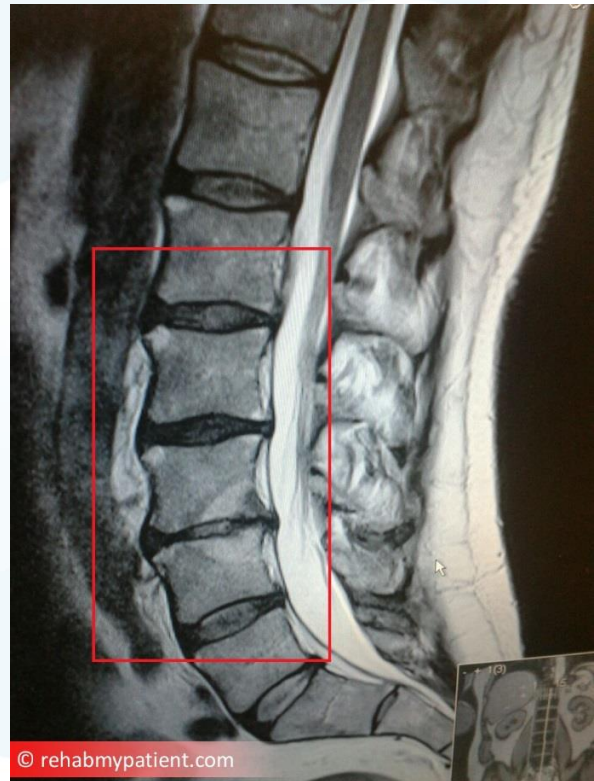
Physical therapists, osteopaths, chiropractors and other manual therapists will work with you to create a specialized exercise program to strengthen the muscles surrounding the joint, reduce pain and increase range of movement. This can reduce inflammation, and make your joints far more comfortable. It can have lasting effects too, so it's not necessarily a short term treatment.

4. Braces and Shoe Inserts

Consider trying to use braces, splints, inserts and other devices to help reduce the amount of pain you are dealing with. These particular devices will provide your joint with support and immobilize the area to make sure there is not an undue amount of pressure on it.

5. Occupational Therapy

Occupational therapists will help you discover methods for handling everyday tasks and working at your job without adding a bunch of extra stress on a joint that is already in pain. Benches in the shower can help relieve pain when standing, while toothbrushes with a large grip will make it easier to brush the teeth.



An MRI scan showing degenerative disc disease (osteoarthritis) of the lumbar spine

Tips:

- As you grow older, the likelihood of contracting the condition tends to increase.
- Women are more prone to joint degeneration than their male counterparts, but it isn't understood as to why that is.
- Playing sports and injuries from an accident can both increase the risk of developing this condition later on in life.
- Carrying additional body weight will place added stress on the joints in the body, especially the knees.
- Jobs that include tasks that are repetitive will place stress on the joints, which can lead to the development of this condition.
- Eat well – good quality nutritious foods are best, such as organic food. Cut down on foods that increase inflammation, such as things containing vegetable oil (crisps, chips, and biscuits) and focus on anti-inflammatory foods such as fish oils, or anything high in omega 3.
- Natural anti-inflammatories such as boswellia serrata and devil's claw may help and may provide an alternative to other medical anti-inflammatories.
- Using Ice and heat can reduce inflammation in a process known as contrast bathing. Talk to your therapist about this for more advice.
- Exercise is good! Stay active, walk, and keep mobile. Sitting around all day will make you stiffer. Gentle exercise has been shown to reduce the pain caused by wear and tear.