

Arthritis



The most common types of arthritis are rheumatoid and osteoarthritis. Rheumatoid arthritis (RA) is a systemic inflammatory disease which manifests itself in multiple joints of the body. It is believed to be the result of a faulty immune response, and lifestyle changes such as exercise do not have much affect on managing symptoms.

Osteoarthritis (OA) is characterized by degeneration of cartilage, the hard but slippery tissue that covers the ends of bones where they meet to form a joint. Healthy cartilage allows bones to glide over one another and absorbs energy from the shock of physical movement. In OA, the surface layer of cartilage breaks down and wears away, allowing bones under the cartilage to rub together and causing pain, swelling and loss of motion of the joint.

The joints most commonly affected by OA are the knees, hips, and those in the hands and spine. The onset of OA is gradual and usually begins after the age of 40. Currently, there is no cure for OA, however, treatment to relieve symptoms is available and can include a combination of patient education, physical therapy, weight control and use of medications.

SYMPTOMS OF OSTEOARTHRITIS

People with OA usually have joint pain and some movement limitations. In some people OA progresses quickly; however, in most individuals joint damage develops gradually over years. OA can be relatively mild and interfere little with day-to-day-life, but it can also cause significant pain and disability.

Warning signs of OA include stiffness in a joint after getting out of bed or sitting for a long period of time, swelling in one or more joints, and a crunching sensation or the sound of bone rubbing on bone. Early in the disease, your joints may ache after physical work or exercise. Later on, joint pain may become more persistent.

Early diagnosis and appropriate management of arthritis, including self-management activities, can help people with arthritis decrease pain, improve function and stay productive. If you have symptoms of OA, see your doctor and begin appropriate management of your condition.

PREVENTING AND MANAGING YOUR OSTEOARTHRITIS

Research has shown that physical activity, like the Curves workout, decreases pain, improves function and delays disability. Physical activity also helps in keeping weight down, and research also suggests that maintaining a healthy weight reduces the risk of developing and decreases progression of OA.

Many Americans are using nutritional supplements, such as glucosamine and chondroitin, in hopes of improving joint pain. Curves JCT Support supplementation, which includes glucosamine and chondroitin, has been proven through research conducted by the Exercise and Sports Nutrition Laboratory at Texas A&M University* to have some therapeutic benefit on reducing pain as well.

*Curves International, Inc. is a corporate member of the International Health, Racquet & Sportsclub Association, a not-for-profit trade association representing over 7,000 health and fitness facilities in 74 countries."





OSTEOARTHRITIS AND EXERCISE

Exercise is one of the best treatments for OA. Exercise can improve mood and outlook, decrease pain, increase flexibility, strengthen the heart and improve blood flow, maintain weight, and promote general physical fitness. The amount and form of exercise that is right for you will depend on which joints are involved, how stable the joints are and whether you have had a joint replaced surgically. Your physician or physical therapist can help you develop a fitness routine that is right for you.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity at least three days of the week, which you can get by going to Curves.

General recommendations include:

- Do 30 minutes of aerobic activity two or three times a week (your three weekly Curves workouts also meet this recommendation)
- Undertake strength training once or twice weekly (or, complete your Curves workouts for this added benefit)
- Include flexibility exercises or stretching (this is part of the complete Curves workout)
- Avoid high impact activities or those that require sudden, forceful movements

Ask your doctor or physical therapist for guidelines for exercising when a joint is sore or if swelling is present. Also, check if you should use pain-relieving drugs or ice after exercise.

* To date, the Exercise and Sports Nutrition Laboratory at Texas A&M University, led by Dr. Richard Kreider; Ph.D., FACSM, has conducted numerous studies examining the Curves program. For more information on this research, please visit <http://curves.tamu.edu/>.