THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT OSTEOARTHRITIS

What is osteoarthritis?

• A degenerative joint disease that causes cartilage to break down.
• Without cartilage, your bones start to rub together, and over time this can permanently damage the joint.
• Osteoarthritis causes pain, swelling, and reduced motion in your joints.
• It can occur in any joint but usually it affects your hands, knees, hips or spine.

What are risk factors for osteoarthritis?

• Getting older.
• Being a woman.
• Bone deformities, such as malformed joints or defective cartilage.
• Joint injuries, such as from playing sports or from an accident.
• Being overweight, which puts added stress on your weight-bearing joints.
• Working in an occupation that places repetitive stress on a particular joint.
• Having diabetes, underactive thyroid, gout, or Paget disease of bone.

How is it treated?

• Keep as active as you can.
• Do the exercises you and your doctor agree are right for you. Go to physical therapy if you need to.
• If you are too heavy, try to lose weight. Ask your doctor for help.
• Use canes, braces, and other aids to make it easier to get around.
• To reduce pain, your doctor may recommend pain relievers, cortisone shots, or lubrication injections.

• Surgery may be used to realign bones or to replace joints.
• Call your doctor if you have fever; red, hot, or swollen joints; more pain than usual; or falls.

What questions should you ask your doctor?

• Which medicines are best to treat my pain?
• Are there side effects? If so, what are they?
• What do I do if my medicines stop working?
• Will shots into my joints help?
• Will I need surgery on my joints?

For More Information

www.arthritis.org/conditions-treatments/disease-center/osteoarthritis/
www.arthritis.today.org/what-you-can-do/staying-active/exercise-videos/
Information on osteoarthritis and other resources from the Arthritis Foundation, including exercise videos.

www.niams.nih.gov/Health_Info/Osteoarthritis/default.asp
Handout on osteoarthritis from the National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases.

http://nihseniorhealth.gov/osteoarthritis/treatmentandresearch/video/arth4_na_intro.html
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Videos on how exercises can help and on using assistive devices from NIH Senior Health.