



HSE ALERT # 167

HEALTH HAZARDS OF OSTEOARTHRITIS

Osteoarthritis is the most common form of arthritis. The simplest way to describe osteoarthritis is that it is wear and tear on the cartilage of person's joints (A softer, firm, thick and slippery tissue that cushions the human body joints called cartilage). It covers and protects the ends of bones where they meet to form a joint.

Causes of osteoarthritis:

In osteoarthritis, there are changes occur in the cartilage that cause it to break down. When cartilage breaks down, the bones rub together and cause damage and pain. Experts do not know why this breakdown in cartilage happens. But aging, joint injury and genetics may be a cause of this disease.



Symptoms:

- **Pain:** Body joints may ache, or the pain may feel burning or sharp. Pain while sleeping or constant pain may be a sign that arthritis is getting worse.
- **Stiffness:** when one has arthritis, getting up in the morning can be hard. Joints may feel stiff and creaky for a short time, until get moving.
- **Muscle weakness:** The muscles around the joints may get weaker. This happens a lot with arthritis in the knee.
- **Swelling:** Arthritis can cause swelling in joints, making them feel tender and sore.
- **Deformed joints:** Joints can start to look like they are the wrong shape, especially as arthritis gets worse.
- **Cracking and creaking:** joints may make crunching, creaking sounds.

Treatment: There is no known cure for osteoarthritis, but treatments can help to reduce pain and maintain joint movement so that you can go about your daily tasks. While medications and joint replacement surgery are key components of treatment for osteoarthritis, following activities also help in bringing relief.

- **Rest.** If you're experiencing pain or inflammation in your joint, rest it for 12 to 24 hours. Find activities that do not require using your joint repetitively. Try taking a 10-minute break every hour.
- **Exercise.** With your doctor's approval, get regular exercise when you feel up to it. Stick to gentle exercises, such as walking, biking or swimming. Exercise can increase endurance and strengthen the muscles around your joint, making joint more stable. Avoid exercising tender, injured or swollen joints.
- **Lose weight.** Being overweight or obese increases the stress on weight-bearing joints, such as knees and hips. Even a small amount of weight loss can relieve some pressure and reduce pain. Consult to doctor about healthy ways to lose weight.
- **Use heat and cold to manage pain.** Using ice or heat on the painful joint can help. Heat may help you loosen up before an activity. Ice is a good pain reliever after activity or exercise.

Conclusion: If pain still remains consult with doctor for further treatment.