

Did you know?.....

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## Osteoarthritis - The Aches and Pains of Joints

Osteoarthritis, also known as OA, is a common problem that affects many people in Canada and can involve many different joints. It is a degenerative condition of the joint itself in which the cartilage (smooth articulating surface) of the bones that create the joint start to degrade. As a result, instead of having a smooth functioning joint that flexes and extends without issue, there is crepitus (a crunching or cracking sensation), stiffness and potentially pain.

OA generally affects the larger, weight bearing joints in the body - namely the hips and knees. It can however affect smaller joints as well - fingers, knuckles, wrists, shoulders, ankles, etc. As stated previously, it can often present with stiffness, pain and limitations in ranges of motion (depending on the joint itself).

Interestingly while there may be a genetic predisposition for certain people to become affected by OA, many patients have specific factors that increase their risk. Specifically, smoking, obesity, joint injuries and surgeries and lack of exercise can be risk factors for the development of OA.

The treatment for OA depends partly on the joint, but generally speaking involves some combination of pain control (with medication), physical therapy (including exercise, physiotherapy, chiropractic therapy and massage), joint injections (for pain relief, especially in the shoulders and knees) and as a last resort joint replacements. The main joints that are amenable to joint replacement therapy are the hips and knees.

If you are concerned about joint pain and potential OA, it's best to contact your physician to discuss the diagnosis and your options for treatment. Remember, exercise is almost always the most effective preventative strategy for joint disease!