Osteoarthritis occurs when there is a breakdown of joint tissues including the smooth cartilage that covers the ends of bones.

The risk of getting osteoarthritis goes up if:
- the person is female;
- someone else in the family has it;
- the joint is loaded abnormally and/or used improperly;
- the person is over their ideal body weight;
- the joint is injured.

Young and old people get osteoarthritis, but as you get older your chance of getting it increases.

Knees, hips and joints in the hands are most commonly affected by osteoarthritis.

The most common symptoms of osteoarthritis are pain and stiffness, but can also include swelling.

The best proven ways to treat osteoarthritis are through physical activity and getting to a person's ideal body weight.

Osteoarthritis is a serious chronic condition that increases the risk of:
- Diabetes;
- Heart disease;
- Stroke;
- High blood pressure.
Here is a list of suggested questions to ask your healthcare providers about osteoarthritis:

Q  Is my joint pain caused by osteoarthritis?
Q  What can I do to help my symptoms of pain and stiffness?
Q  What ways are proven to reduce my pain symptoms?
Q  Do I have to take medicine or are there other things I can do to help myself?
Q  How long will it take for the prescribed medication(s) to take effect?
Q  What can I do to help prevent further joint damage?
Q  Should I exercise if I have joint pain? How much and how often?
Q  What are reliable websites with more patient information on arthritis?
Your joint examination

What to expect

Hip Rotation
Lateral movement

Hip Flexion
Knee to chest

Knee Range of Motion
Heel to buttock

Joint Strength
Sit and stand

Hand function and strength
Squeeze
Wrist
Grip
Pinch

Other tests beyond the physical examination are not usually required and will only be ordered if there is a concern.
## Your self-care checklist

Suggestions to help you get the most out of your self-care plan.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Physical Activity</th>
<th>Modify Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Walking, water based exercise and cycling are “joint friendly”</td>
<td>Protect or support joints when necessary by using splints or braces for affected joints</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perform aerobic, range of motion and muscle strengthening exercises to help keep joints well supported, flexible and aligned</td>
<td>Modify your home or change how you do things when joints are painful</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Diet

- Eat healthy balanced portions from all food groups, and avoid “fast food” high in saturated fats

### Medications

- Follow your medication routine as closely as possible to best control osteoarthritis symptoms

## Check out these resources

### Community Recreation Centres

Most cities have recreation facilities that often include swimming pools, water-based exercise programs, fitness rooms, walking tracks and gyms.

### Walking Clubs

- [www.walks.ca](http://www.walks.ca)

### Water Based Exercise

- [https://www.swimming.ca/en/](https://www.swimming.ca/en/)
- [https://ymca.ca/What-We-Offer/Aquatics](https://ymca.ca/What-We-Offer/Aquatics)

### Patient Resources

- [www.arthritis.ca](http://www.arthritis.ca)
- [www.jointhealth.org](http://www.jointhealth.org)
- [https://oaaction.unc.edu/](https://oaaction.unc.edu/)