

# Osteoarthritis and Your Health

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Maintain a healthy weight. If you are overweight, talk with your medical provider.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Eat a healthy diet.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Follow your medical or mental health providers' directions regarding medications.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Avoid high impact sports. Knees and hips are vulnerable to wear and tear, so choose exercises and activity like walking, swimming and resistance training.</li> </ul> |
|---|---|

## Green Flags — All Clear



### If you:

- Stay as active as your condition allows
- Do exercises to help strengthen your muscles and potentially stimulate cartilage growth
- Can do your daily activities

## What this means ...

- Good work!
- Your symptoms are under control

**Keep up the good work!**

## Yellow Flags — Caution



### If you have:

- Joint pain that interferes with your daily activities
- Pain that does not go away with common pain relieving medication
- Increased muscle weakness, particularly muscles around you knee or ankle
- Increased swelling in your joints
- Reduced ability to move your joints

## What this means ...

- You may have an Arthritis flare-up or your Arthritis treatment plan may need to be changed
- You may benefit from a physical therapist evaluation

**Call your doctor, consulting nurse, or health care provider if symptoms do not improve.**

**Name:**

**Number:**

**Instructions:**

**If you notice a Yellow Flag, work closely with your health care team.**

## Red Flags — Stop and Think



### If you:

- Notice a sudden loss of mobility, including an inability to walk or to bear weight
- Have a fall associated with pain
- Have a fever, noted redness or new joint swelling

## What this means ...

You need to be evaluated by a health care professional immediately.

**If possible, notify your health care provider's office**

**Name:**

**Number:**

**Follow these instructions:**

**CALL 9-1-1**

**If you notice a Red Flag, call your doctor.**

# Osteoarthritis Fast Facts

- Osteoarthritis is a joint disease that mostly affects cartilage.
- People with osteoarthritis often have joint pain and reduced motion.
- It affects only joints and not internal organs.
- It usually develops over time. Risk factors include being overweight, aging, joint injury, joints that are not properly formed, a genetic defect in joint cartilage and stresses on the joints from certain jobs and playing sports.
- Osteoarthritis can occur in any joint; however, it occurs most often in the hands, knees, hips, and spine.
- Warning signs include stiffness in a joint after getting out of bed or sitting for long time, swelling or tenderness in one or more joints, or a crunching feeling or the sound of bone rubbing on bone.
- There are **four main treatment goals**: improve joint function, keep a healthy body weight, control pain, and achieve a healthy lifestyle. **Treatment plans** can involve: exercise, weight control, rest and joint care, nondrug pain relief techniques to control pain, medicines, complementary and alternative therapies, and surgery.

## What can you do?

- Talk with your health care provider about an exercise program, including a walking program. Walking, even for brief periods may be helpful. You may need to start out walking short distances, maybe every other day, and then gradually increase your time and distance.
- Take medications only as prescribed.
- There are three kinds of programs help people learn about osteoarthritis and self-care and improve their good health attitude:
  1. Patient education programs, including Chronic Pain Self-Management workshop.
  2. Arthritis self-management programs
  3. Arthritis support groups.
- Arthritis self-management programs can help people understand the disease, reduce pain while staying active, cope with their body, mind, and emotions, have more control over the disease, and live an active, independent life.
- Maintain a good health attitude:
  1. Focus on what you can do instead of what you cannot do
  2. Focus on your strengths not the weaknesses
  3. Take your daily activities and break them down into small tasks
  4. Think about physical activity and healthy eating daily
  5. Think about ways to manage stress
  6. Balance activity with rest periods
  7. Develop a support network of family, friends, and your health team

## Aging and Disability Services

Aging and Disability Services (ADS)—the Area Agency on Aging for King County—plans, coordinates, and advocates for comprehensive services for older adults, family caregivers, and people with disabilities throughout Seattle and King County.

For more information, call 1-844-348-5464 or e-mail [info@communitylivingconnections.org](mailto:info@communitylivingconnections.org)



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