

## **OSTEOARTHRITIS**

### **What is Arthritis?**

Arthritis is a term that refers to a number of conditions that cause pain within the joints in our body. For this article I will be talking about the most common type of arthritis, osteoarthritis or OA.

When people say they have arthritis they are often referring to osteoarthritis. Osteoarthritis is a condition that can affect any of the joints in our body (most commonly our spines, hips, knees and hands). It affects the whole joint and leads to damage to the cartilage that lines the joint, weakening of the bones and deterioration of the soft tissue that holds the joint together.

### **Symptoms of Osteoarthritis**

The symptoms of arthritis can often develop slowly over time. The main symptoms of osteoarthritis are pain and stiffness of the affected joint. This can make normal day to day tasks uncomfortable and can limit the amount of movement of the joint.

### **Does everyone get Osteoarthritis eventually?**

Contrary to popular belief, osteoarthritis does not affect everyone as we get older and some people will never develop it. There are however some risk factors such as obesity, previous joint injuries and a family history of osteoarthritis (to name a few) that can increase the likelihood of someone suffering from osteoarthritis.

### **How can you reduce the risk of getting osteoarthritis?**

Maintaining a healthy active lifestyle is the main thing we can all do to help reduce the risk of developing osteoarthritis. Maintaining a good diet, a healthy weight and participating in regular physical activity have all been proven to play a part in reducing the chances of developing osteoarthritis.

### **What can I do if I already have an arthritic and painful joint?**

Similar to the preventative measures above, weight control and being active are the two main things that can help manage the pain from an arthritic joint.

Exercise and keeping your painful joint moving is of vital importance. Trying to maintain as much movement and strength in and around the affected joint can both help manage the pain from the joint, as well as make day to day tasks more comfortable. Depending on the joint in question, certain exercise may be useful. For example, often with knee osteoarthritis a simple sit to stand exercise can maintain

movement in the knees while strengthening all the small muscles around the knee. More generally, swimming and cycling are often suggested as activities that may be comfortable for those with osteoarthritic joints.

With a painful arthritic joint finding the right type and level of exercise can be tricky. It sometimes takes some trial and error to find what works best for you, but with perseverance, exercise can be an amazing tool in managing arthritic pain.