



Joint Replacement

Facts About Knee and Hip Osteoarthritis

- 1. The knees and hips are vulnerable to wear and tear.** Cartilage is the slippery lubricant that covers your joints and lets them glide smoothly. Over time, this cartilage can wear away, particularly in the knee and hip joints that support your body. Your age, your weight, and old injuries also matter. The result is that the bones of the joints rub against each other without enough cushioning. This is called osteoarthritis (OA).
- 2. The first sign of hip OA is often stiffness in the groin or thigh.** You may notice pain in your groin, thigh, or buttocks when you exercise. It may be worse in the mornings. In the early stages of OA, resting will usually relieve the pain.
- 3. The first sign of knee OA is often pain and stiffness.** Similar to OA, pain is typically worse in the morning. You may find that your knee locks or buckles when you walk. Eventually, you may feel pain and have trouble flexing your knee. Kneeling or climbing stairs may make the pain worse.
- 4. You can relieve OA at home.** First, get enough rest. While it's important to stay active, give your joints time off when they hurt. Second, ask your doctor about taking chondroitin and glucosamine. These supplements may help ease pain and help you move more comfortably. You can try anti-inflammatory drugs like ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin) or naproxen sodium (Aleve) if your doctor says these are safe for you. They provide fast relief for mild to moderate arthritis pain.
- 5. Losing weight reduces pain and stiffness.** Being overweight puts extra stress on your knees and hips. Doctors say that every 10 pounds you lose can lower your arthritis pain by as much as 20%.
- 6. Exercise helps joints work better.** Keep limber and start with stretching. Low-impact exercise, such as swimming or cycling, will strengthen your joints and increase their range of motion. A physical therapist can show you exercises to strengthen the muscles that support your knees or hips. Stronger muscles can reduce the stress on your joints during everyday activities, too.

7. OA of the knee or hip can make it hard to walk. If there isn't enough cartilage lining your joint, walking might hurt. Your joint may get so stiff that you can't bend your knee or rotate your hip. People with severe OA of the knee or hip may need a cane to walk.

8. Without treatment, OA usually gets worse. As the cartilage continues to wear away, the joint may become swollen and painful. In severe cases, bone rubs directly against bone, making any movement of the joint excruciating. Even at this point, you can still take steps to slow the damage.

9. Joint replacement gets rid of pain. When other things don't provide enough relief, your doctor may recommend a hip or knee replacement. This is called arthroplasty. Often all of the joint is replaced, which is called a total joint arthroplasty. In certain situations only a partial joint arthroplasty is necessary. After recovering, most people can walk more easily and are pain-free.

10. Rehabilitation is vital after joint replacement surgery. A rehab program includes vigorous exercises to make sure your new joint is flexible and to strengthen the muscles around it. People who stick to their rehab program have the greatest possible range of motion, meaning they can do more of the activities they used to do.