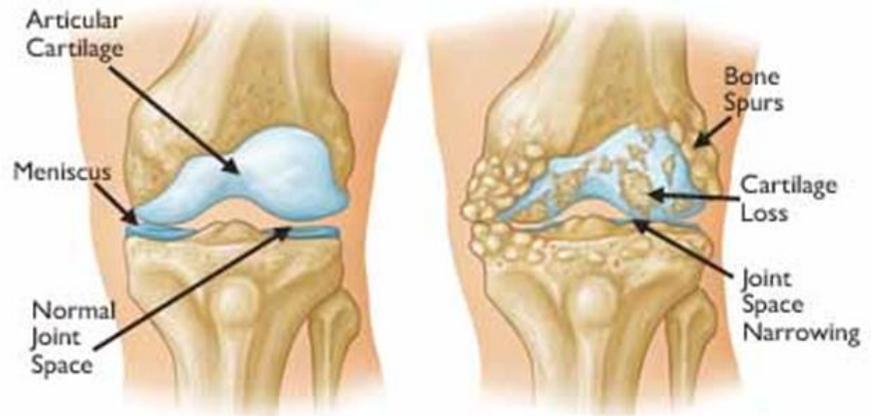


About Knee Arthritis

What is Arthritis of the Knee?

Arthritis is inflammation of one or more of your joints. Pain, swelling, and stiffness are the primary symptoms of arthritis. Any joint in the body may be affected by the disease, but it is particularly common in the knee.

Knee arthritis can make it hard to do many everyday activities, such as walking or climbing stairs. It is a major cause of lost work time and a serious disability for many people.



Types of Arthritis

The most common types of arthritis are osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis, but there are more than 100 different forms. While arthritis is mainly an adult disease, some forms affect children.

Osteoarthritis

Osteoarthritis is the most common form of arthritis in the knee. It is a degenerative, "wear-and-tear" type of arthritis that occurs most often in people 50 years of age and older, but may occur in younger people, too. Osteoarthritis develops slowly and the pain it causes worsens over time.

Rheumatoid Arthritis

Rheumatoid arthritis is an autoimmune disease that attacks multiple joints throughout the body, including the knee joint. It is symmetrical, meaning that it usually affects the same joint on both sides of the body. In rheumatoid arthritis the synovial membrane that covers the knee joint begins to swell. This results in knee pain and stiffness.

Posttraumatic Arthritis

After trauma, posttraumatic arthritis is a form of arthritis that develops after an injury to the knee. For example, a broken bone may damage the joint surface and lead to arthritis years after the injury. Meniscal tears and ligament injuries can cause instability and additional wear on the knee joint, which over time can result in arthritis.

Symptoms of Knee Arthritis

A knee joint affected by arthritis may be painful and inflamed. Generally, the pain develops gradually over time, although sudden onset is also possible. Other symptoms include:

- The joint may become stiff and swollen, making it difficult to bend and straighten the knee.
- Pain and swelling may be worse in the morning, or after sitting or resting.
- Loose fragments of cartilage and other tissue can interfere with the smooth motion of joints. The knee may "lock" or "stick" during movement. It may creak, click, snap or make a grinding noise (crepitus).
- Pain may cause a feeling of weakness or buckling in the knee.
- There can be increased joint pain with changes in the weather and rain.

Treatment

Although there is no cure for arthritis, there are many treatment options available to help manage pain and keep people staying active.

Lifestyle modifications. Switching from high impact activities to lower impact activities (like swimming or cycling) will put less stress on your knee. Losing weight can reduce stress on the knee joint, resulting in less pain and increased function.

Physical therapy. Specific exercises can help increase range of motion and flexibility, as well as help strengthen the muscles in your leg. Your doctor and a physical therapist can help develop an individualized exercise program for you.

Braces and Assistive devices. Using devices such as a cane, wearing shock-absorbing shoes or inserts, or wearing a brace or knee sleeve can be helpful. An "unloader" brace can shift weight away from the affected portion of the knee.

Medications. Over-the-counter, non-narcotic pain relievers are usually the first choice of therapy for arthritis of the knee. Acetaminophen (Tylenol) is a simple, over-the-counter pain reliever that can help reduce arthritis pain. Topical creams and ointments may relieve some of the pain (Ben-Gay, Tiger Balm, etc.).

NSAIDs: Another type of pain reliever is a nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drug, or NSAID (pronounced "en-said"). NSAIDs, such as ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin, Midol) and naproxen (Aleve), are available both over-the-counter and by prescription.

Injections. Corticosteroids (also known as cortisone) are powerful anti-inflammatory agents that can be injected into the joint. These injections provide pain relief and reduce inflammation; however, the effects do not last indefinitely. Viscosupplementation: Lubricants are injected into the joint to improve the quality of the joint fluid. Common preparations are called Supartz, Synvisc, Euflexxa and Orthovisc.

Surgical Treatment for Knee Arthritis

Arthroscopy. In cases where arthritis is accompanied by a degenerative meniscal tear or loose body, arthroscopic surgery may be recommended to treat the torn meniscus.

Cartilage grafting. Normal, healthy cartilage tissue may be taken from another part of the knee or from a tissue bank to fill a hole in the articular cartilage. Grafting is typically considered for younger patients who have small areas of cartilage damage.

Osteotomy. In a knee osteotomy, either the tibia (shinbone) or femur (thighbone) is cut and then reshaped to relieve pressure on the knee joint. Knee osteotomy is used when you have early-stage osteoarthritis that has damaged just one side of the knee joint.

Total or partial knee replacement (arthroplasty)

New metal and plastic joint surfaces are placed to restore the function of the knee.

A partial knee replacement is an option when damage is limited to just one part of the knee (left). A total knee replacement prosthesis replaces all the sides of the knee (right).



Questions? Call us at 925.600.7020