

ATLANTA ORTHOPEDICS

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Osteoarthritis Care Guide

As many as 36 million people in the United States have some form of arthritis or joint inflammation. Arthritis can make many types of activities become painful and difficult. Many types of arthritis symptoms can be improved with proper medical treatment.

Osteoarthritis is the most common type of arthritis. Osteoarthritis is a degenerative disease associated with the breakdown of cartilage which is the smooth lining between joints. As the condition worsens, rough cartilage and even bones can rub together, thus causing pain, inflammation, and eventual joint deformities.

Some factors that can contribute to osteoarthritis are heredity, obesity, injury and joint overuse. Osteoarthritis is most common in women around menopause, in men during and after middle age, and in athletes or others who have had a traumatic injury to a joint. Some symptoms of osteoarthritis are pain, stiffness and swelling in the joints. Treatment of osteoarthritis is focused on reducing pain and inflammation while increasing joint mobility and function.

Surgery is usually reserved for advanced cases that are unresponsive to conservative treatments. Arthritis Surgery can consist of Arthroscopic Surgery in less severe cases, and progress up to Joint Replacement Surgery for more serious cases. Hip Replacement, Knee Replacement, and Shoulder Replacement are the most commonly performed major joint procedures for osteoarthritis.

If you experience the joint symptoms listed above, the first step is to have an evaluation by a practitioner that specializes in joint conditions. An accurate diagnosis is the first step to developing a plan of treatment.

Arthritis is a condition that stays with you throughout the life of your affected joint. Just as important as the medical care is the need to learn to modify your lifestyle and to live well with arthritis.

Below, we have listed several important areas where we focus in managing the symptoms of osteoarthritis.

Maintain Ideal Weight:

Research links weight gain and obesity to osteoarthritis. Excess weight puts extra stress on weight bearing joints. Maintaining your ideal weight may help relieve symptoms and may also decrease the rate of progression of osteoarthritis.

Atlanta Wellness Lifestyle and Sports Fitness Center has personal trainers who are knowledgeable in specific exercises that can benefit patients with osteoarthritis. Gym memberships, personal training, metabolic and VO2 testing and weight loss programs are available to assist you in your weight loss and fitness goals. If this facility is not near your home or does not meet your needs, please see our list of local fitness centers and their services.

Exercise:

Proper exercise is an important part of maintaining healthy joints and a healthy body weight. Exercise helps deliver oxygen and nourishment to joint tissue. By strengthening supporting muscles, pressure on joints can be reduced which can reduce pain and increase mobility. Inactivity can actually cause osteoarthritis pain to progress more rapidly.

It may be helpful to work with a physical therapist or personal trainer to learn about which exercises are best for you. We typically recommend low impact exercises such as walking, using an elliptical machine, water aerobics and certain strength training programs. Personal trainers at Atlanta Wellness Lifestyle and Sports Fitness Center are trained in developing specific exercise plans for people with osteoarthritis. If Atlanta Wellness is not a convenient location for you, please see our list of local fitness centers and water aerobics classes.

Pain Management:

Most patients will get some relief from prescription or over the counter anti-inflammatory medications. These medicines should be used regularly, or long-term, only on the advice of your physician. Typical medications used include ibuprofen, motrin, advil, naprosyn, aleve and celebrex.

There are other topical pain relievers available, such as the use of hot and cold therapy, gels or creams.

There are other ways to improve pain in addition to the common medications. Some of the more popular techniques are:

- Exercise
- Stress management
- Massage therapy
- Relaxation therapy
- Biofeedback

Consult with your doctor to find out what over the counter pain relievers are right for you ,and how long it is recommended that you can take the medications. Taking pills with food and water can help alleviate some stomach issues. Anti-inflammatory medications are associated with bleeding ulcers, so long-term or regular use requires the advice of your physician.

Dietary Supplements:

Glucosamine sulfate and Chondroitin are natural substances found in joint fluid. Research has shown that these supplements can help the body reduce pain from osteoarthritis. These supplements are available in capsule, powder and liquid form. Because the FDA does not regulate dietary supplements the way it does medications, it is important to buy a pharmaceutical grade supplement. Be sure that there is research to support that the ingredients on the label are actually in the product. We recommend Lyflo Select Joint Complex, which is only available through health care professionals. It can be purchased at comparable prices to store bought brands.

This product is available at Atlanta Wellness or can be ordered online at www.lyflo.com. Be sure to enter the login ZEIG08 with your online order at www.lyflo.com.

Nutrition:

Physicians recommend seven basic steps for a balanced, healthy diet based on The Food Guide Pyramid developed by the U.S. Departments of Agriculture and Health and Human Services:

1. Eat a variety of foods
2. Maintain an appropriate weight
3. Consume fat and cholesterol in moderation
4. Consume sugar in moderation
5. Eat plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables
6. Use salt and sodium in moderation
7. Drink alcohol in moderation

Atlanta Wellness promotes balanced, nutritional eating in partnership with a consistent exercise program. Atlanta Wellness has partnered with Good Measure Meals to provide a meal pick up location for the Northern Gwinnett and Dacula area. The Good Measure Meals plan is a convenient and affordable way to get balanced nutrition while enjoying fresh, ready-to-eat meals. Meals are conveniently delivered to your home or office, or you can simply pick them up at Atlanta Wellness on Mondays and Thursdays.

Coping with Stress and Depression:

Dealing with chronic pain and lifestyle changes due to osteoarthritis can lead to stress and even depression. The management techniques listed above can help reduce the symptoms of pain, stress and depression. People who cope with stress by using problem solving strategies are less likely to experience depression. A family practice or other primary care physician can assist you in identifying symptoms of depression. Also, if you are experiencing these symptoms consistently, we can help you to locate community resources such as support groups and mental health practitioners.