

OSTEOARTHRITIS

What is Osteoarthritis?

Osteoarthritis (OA) is a condition that can affect the joints in your body. The most common joints that develop OA are in the knees, hips, spine and hands. Osteoarthritis is an umbrella term that describes variable degeneration within the joint. It can cause inflammation around the joint, damage to the joint cartilage, bony spurs around the edge of the joint or deterioration of ligaments or tendons that support the joint. One or more of these factors may be contributing to your pain.

Why does it happen?

The exact cause of osteoarthritis is unknown however several factors can contribute to the increased risk of having OA. These factors include:

- Age, OA is more common in the older population due to the gradual wear and tear of the joint overtime.
- Obesity due to the increased stress placed on your weight bearing joint
- Manual labour / sport resulting in increased wear and tear of the joint
- Previous joint injury
- Genetics

What can a physiotherapist do?

Although there is currently no cure for OA your physiotherapist can assist you in managing your condition and help ease the pain.

Exercise is one of the most important and beneficial treatments for OA. It can assist with the strength, support and stability around your joints and help to reduce load through the joint. Exercise programs that the physiotherapist develops are individualized to best suit your needs. Low impact exercise is beneficial for people with OA. Other form of exercise could involve cycling, tai chi, hydrotherapy and pilates.

The physiotherapist can also provide treatment and give you education and advice on methods to reduce the inflammation and stiffness within your joints. Treatment may include manual therapy, electrotherapy and taping or bracing for support.

Pain management is an important aspect in the control of your OA. Your physiotherapist will work closely with your doctor and pharmaceutical provider to assist you in managing your pain.

Outcome

With appropriate physiotherapy intervention and pain relief you can effectively manage your OA so that it has little implications on your daily activity. In severe cases or when conservative treatment fails joint replacement may be necessary. This is most common for hips and knees.

