

## What Is Osteoarthritis?

**Osteoarthritis** is a disease that causes the cartilage in your joints to break down. Cartilage is a smooth substance that protects the ends of your bones and helps your joints move. Osteoarthritis becomes more common as people get older. To diagnose this disease, your doctor will ask about your health history and perform an exam. X-rays may also be needed.

### Symptoms

Osteoarthritis can affect any joint, with women tending to get it in their hands. Weight-bearing joints, such as the hip and knee, are often affected in both men and women. Some of the more common symptoms of this disease include:

- Joint pain and stiffness. Long periods of rest or using a joint too long or too hard can make pain and stiffness worse.
- Weak muscles or wobbly joints.
- Joints that have lost normal shape and motion.



**Healthy knee joint**



**Knee joint with osteoarthritis**

### If Surgery Is Needed

For people with severe joint damage, surgery can decrease pain and improve movement. Joint replacement is the most common surgery used to treat osteoarthritis. Joints in the knee, hip, and shoulder are replaced most often.

