

YOUR GROUP23

PATIENT HEALTH JOURNEY

BECOME AN EXPERT: Knee Osteoarthritis

Knee Osteoarthritis (OA) is the most common form of arthritis. OA typically affects the cartilage that covers the joints, at the end of the bones. This rubbery cap of cartilage acts as a shock absorber and provides a smooth surface for bones to glide on during movement. With the onset of OA, the cartilage begins to thin, and the surface roughens. These changes can be due to age, joint injury, overuse, obesity, weak muscles, genetic factors, and other underlying diseases. The **primary symptoms** of OA are pain, stiffness, loss of range of motion, and swelling. Once identified, many factors will influence if the problem will progress or remain steady. Once OA is present, it can be controlled but cannot be cured.

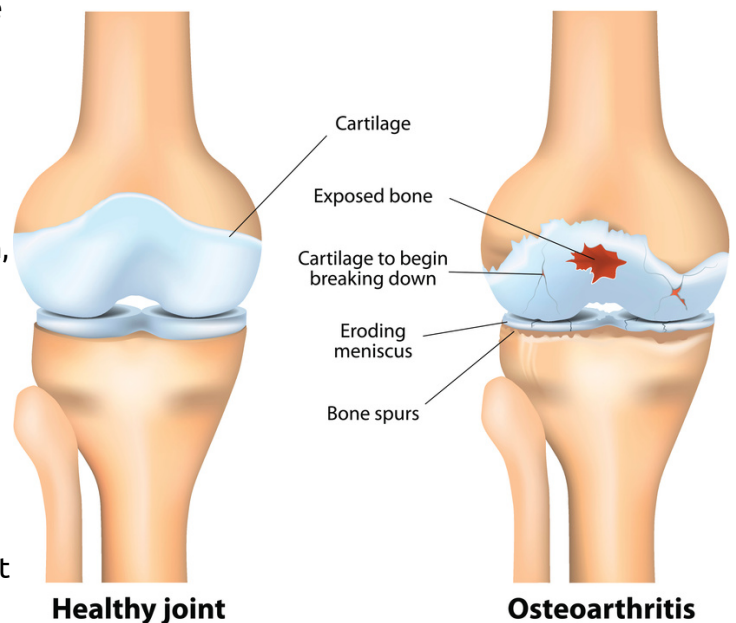
An important concept to understand as it relates to joint problems is **load capacity**. Load capacity simply means the cartilage can only absorb a certain amount of force before it begins to break down.

An acute, sudden force applied to the knee may cause a breakdown of the cartilage. Most individuals will remember an acute injury, such as slipping on ice and feeling immediate pain afterward. Other times, OA can be chronic, meaning that gradual overloading causes the cartilage to break down over time. This chronic breakdown can occur during an activity you have always done without pain, such as going for a walk or up and down stairs.

Understandably, when there is pain in the joint, there is a decrease in use or over-protection. This can result in the weakening of the muscles that surround the knee joint. Some weight bearing is necessary to maintain cartilage health. Cartilage is a living tissue, and still requires **optimal loading**, meaning the cartilage in your knee joint needs a healthy amount of weight and movement to keep the tissue strong.

A component of optimal loading and load capacity is how much weight the joint can bear on impact. Physics suggests every pound of weight above the knees puts roughly 6 pounds of weight onto the knee at impact. Total body weight is a modifiable risk we consider a bio-psycho-social issue, which is why we value our **Health and Wellness providers** immensely. The Health and Wellness team can work with you to discuss any psychological and social barriers in your wellness journey, in combination with a metabolism assessment to build a lifestyle program fit specifically to you. Professional support in all areas is strongly encouraged for patients to achieve their health and wellness goals.

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BECOME AN EXPERT cont'd

Aging is another factor that naturally causes the cartilage to slowly soften and weaken. We know it's unavoidable; as we age, so do our tissues. This leads us again to the concept of optimal loading; your aging joints are more likely to remain strong and healthy if you continue to use them and we can help find the appropriate activities, exercises and modifications to keep you moving!

Knee OA cartilage breakdown can be seen on **x-ray images** by identifying a loss of joint space within the knee. An MRI or other diagnostic imaging is not typically required. Many patients also assume they will need **surgical intervention** to manage their knee OA, but studies have shown in many cases, surgical intervention does not reduce pain or increase range of motion. Still, some Health Journeys do end up requiring surgical intervention, which is not a failure. We want you to use this Journey as a comprehensive approach to improve your overall health and movement. Should surgery be necessary, you will be a better candidate after following this Health Journey, with fewer health risks, quicker recovery, and better long-term outcomes. However, there are many Toolkit options we will discuss before exploring surgical intervention.

Why does this matter?

At Group23, we often see patients frustrated with their OA symptoms, lack of improvement, and the cost of ineffective treatments, products, and devices. Often the biggest issue we see with a diagnosis is the patient's lack of knowledge of the subject because no one has taken the time to explain what is truly happening! It's not enough to just know the word osteoarthritis; it's important to us that you understand what it means!

Now you know more about OA, loading capacity, and optimal loading, we can address treatment options that support strengthening your muscles, staying active, and optimizing body weight. No matter where you start, you can get to the point of less pain, more strength, improved motion and balance, more daily activities, and decreased risk of falling... **IF** you create SMART goals, utilize the options in your Toolkit, and commit to working proactively with your Group23 Health Journey team!

Our care philosophy

We see treatment choices as a Patient Health Journey, and we take pride in being on this Journey with you the entire way. The most crucial part is becoming an expert and creating Rise Above goals specific to you and your lifestyle. Once your Group23 healthcare team understands your destination, we can accurately create a treatment plan that is fit for you!



Check out a free lifestyle assessment, available with the Health & Wellness team!



Surgery is a possibility, but a last resort option in the case of knee OA. We have a whole Toolkit of other options to try first!



Becoming an expert and setting a SMART goal ensures every treatment decision reflects your priorities, not ours!



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