

Understanding Arthritis

More normal, and more manageable, than it sounds

Few words worry people more than "arthritis", it's one of the most common things patients blame their pain on, and one of the most misunderstood. The reality is **more reassuring than the word suggests**.

What osteoarthritis really is

Osteoarthritis is largely **normal, age-related change** in a joint, cartilage and bone gradually adapting over a lifetime of use. In that sense it's a bit like grey hair or wrinkles: extremely common, expected with age, and not a sign that something is broken.

It goes by many names

Depending on the joint, you may see it written as **osteoarthritis**, **spondylosis** (in the spine), **degenerative joint disease (DJD)**, **degenerative changes**, or plain **"wear and tear."** These terms often describe the same normal, age-related process, so seeing them on a report isn't cause for alarm.

Arthritis isn't always the reason you hurt

Here's what surprises most people: what shows on an X-ray often **doesn't match how much pain someone feels**. Many people have clear arthritis on imaging and no pain at all. So an arthritis diagnosis doesn't automatically mean it's the cause of your pain, and it isn't a life sentence of decline.

ONE IMPORTANT DISTINCTION

This handout is about **osteoarthritis**, the common, age-related kind. A different group, the **inflammatory arthritides** (like rheumatoid or psoriatic arthritis), are driven by the immune system rather than aging and are managed differently, often by a rheumatologist. If your joints are warm, swollen, or stiff for a long time each morning, let us know so we can point you the right way.

THE BEST THING FOR MOST ARTHRITIS

Movement and exercise are the most recommended first step. Keeping the joint moving is safe and helps you stay strong and functional, and it's what guidelines favor for most people. Most arthritis responds well to this; more advanced cases may benefit from added options like injections or, occasionally, joint replacement, and we'll be honest about when that's worth considering.

How we help

- **Movement & exercise plans** to keep the joint strong and mobile
- **Hands-on care** to ease stiffness and improve comfort
- **Activity & load guidance** so you stay active with confidence
- **A clear plan**, and referral if a case needs more

The takeaway: arthritis is common, often painless, and rarely the whole story. For most people, staying active is the best medicine, and we'll help you keep moving well.

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