

> What is osteoarthritis?

Osteoarthritis is a long term condition that causes joints to become painful and stiff. It is the common type of arthritis in the UK. Osteoarthritis can affect any joint in the body but the most commonly affected joints are the knees, hips and small hand joints.

> What are the symptoms?

Joint pain and stiffness are the main symptoms of osteoarthritis. Some people also experience swelling, tenderness and a grating or crackling sound when moving the affected joints.

> What are the causes?

In osteoarthritis, the protective cartilage on the ends of your bones breaks down, causing pain, swelling and problems moving the joints. Bony growth can develop, and the area can become inflamed (red and swollen).

Although the exact cause of osteoarthritis is not known, several factors may increase the risk. These include:

- **Joint injury** - Overusing your joint when it has not had enough time to heal after an injury or operation
- **Other conditions** - Osteoarthritis can occur in joints severely damaged by a previous or existing condition such as rheumatoid arthritis or gout
- **Age** - Your risk of developing the condition increases as you get older
- **Family History** - Osteoarthritis may run in families, although studies have not identified a single gene responsible
- **Being over weight** - Being over weight puts excess strain on your joints, particularly those that bear most of your weight such as your knees and hips

> What about treatment?

Severe symptoms can be managed with treatments such as:

- Medication- to relieve your pain
- A structured exercise plan carried out under the supervision of a physiotherapist
- Surgery may be carried out if damage to joints is very severe

References:

NHS Choices: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/osteoarthritis/symptoms/>

NICE: <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/cg177/chapter/Patient-centred-care>

Self Care Tips

- Regular exercise, swimming and cycling are ideal as they don't put too much strain on your joints.
- Eat a well balanced diet and maintain a healthy weight as being over weight can put a strain on your joints.
- Wear comfortable and supportive footwear.

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To contact Bromley Well call the Single Point of Access on **0300 3309 039** or Lifestyle Support on **07985 444210 / 07985 433045** Email enquiry@bromleywell.org.uk www.bromleywell.org.uk



> Related resources and services

Versus arthritis Help Line: 0800 5200 520 www.versusarthritis.org	A National charity providing information on the latest research into arthritis and tips and advice on managing the condition.
Arthritis Action Helpline 0800 652 3188 www.arthritisaction.org.uk	A National charity offering healthy eating advice, physical therapies, exercise tips and pain management techniques.
NHS Conditions Arthritis	NHS conditions pages contain information about the causes, symptoms and treatment of arthritis and advice for people living with the condition.
Connect Well Bromley / Arthritis	Local support for people living with arthritis.
BDA fact sheet osteoarthritis	The Association of UK Dietitians food fact sheets containing diet advice for people living with arthritis and tips for managing the condition.