

FAST FACTS: Joint Pain

Joint pain is associated with either a trauma to or disease of the joints and is extremely common in older adults. If there has not been a traumatic injury, such as a fall, the focus of joint pain is on an inflammatory joint disease such as chronic osteoarthritis (OA), degenerative joint disease (DJD), or gouty arthritis. Both OA and DJD have a slow onset and become a chronic condition. Both may respond to pain medications or physical therapy. Gout requires prescription medication during the acute attack.



- ✓ **Osteoarthritis (OA) / Degenerative Joint Disease (DJD)**
 - Common sites are knees, fingers, ankles, spine, hips, feet, shoulder.
 - Affects multiple sites and is caused by wear and tear on the joint.
 - Signs/symptoms: joint stiffness is most common in morning, pain typical after exercise or pressure on joint, rest may not relieve pain in the affected joint.

- ✓ **Gouty Arthritis**
 - Most common site is the big toe, followed by ankles, heel, knee, wrist, and fingers.
 - Seen in men over age 35 and woman after menopause.
 - Caused by increased levels of uric acid.
 - Signs/symptoms: red, hot, swollen, and/or inflamed joint but NO morning stiffness.

- ✓ **Traumatic Injury**
 - Dislocation or ligament/tendon injury; sudden onset of pain/swelling after a trauma.
 - Immobilize the injury site and call your healthcare provider, ice may help.

- ✓ **Possible Intervention(s)**
 - Osteoarthritis / Degenerative Joint Disease
 - Try early morning range of motion or low impact exercise.
 - If pain is in response to exercise, rest the joint; ice or heat may also help.
 - Medication is often needed to relieve the pain.
 - Gouty Arthritis
 - Medication typically needed at the onset of an attack.
 - Prevention is KEY: avoid alcohol and foods high in purines which are the chemical compounds that cause uric acid (get list from healthcare provider).

- ✓ **What Else You Should Do**
 - Write down and share information about your pain with your healthcare provider.
 - Use a [Pain Diary](#) to note important information useful to the healthcare provider.
 - Try a non-drug treatment and document the impact on your pain in your Pain Diary.

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References

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). December 2, 2021. *Joint Pain and Arthritis*. <https://www.cdc.gov/arthritis/pain/index.htm>.

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