

FAST FACTS: Joint Pain

Joint pain is associated with either a trauma or disease of the joints and is extremely common in older adults. In the absence of a known traumatic injury (i.e. fall, etc.), generally 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 analgesics or physical therapy. Gout requires prescription medication during the acute attack.

✓ **OA/DJD**

- Common sites: knees, fingers, ankles, spine, hips, feet, shoulder
- OA: affects multiple sites, caused by wear and tear on joint
- Signs/symptoms: joint stiffness most common in morning, pain typical after exercise or pressure on joint, rest may not relieve pain in affected joint

✓ **Gouty Arthritis**

- Most common site: Big toe; followed by ankles, heel, knee, wrist, fingers
- Seen in men > 35 & woman after menopause, increased levels of uric acid
- Signs/symptoms: red, hot, swollen, inflamed joint but NO morning stiffness

✓ **Traumatic Injury**

- Dislocation or ligament/tendon injury: sudden onset of pain/swelling after a trauma (i.e. fall); Immobilize and call health care provider, ice may help

✓ **Possible Intervention(s)**

- OA/DJD
 - Early morning try range of motion or low impact exercise
 - If pain is in response to exercise, rest joint; ice or heat may also help
 - Medication is often needed to relieve the pain
- Gout
 - Medication typically needed at onset of attack
 - Prevention is KEY: avoid alcohol and foods high in purines (i.e. bacon, turkey, liver, trout, scallops, etc.)

✓ **What Caregivers can do to help their loved one with Joint Pain**

- Contact health care provider for assessment of condition
- Consider using a Pain Diary to note important information with provider
- Encourage your loved one to try a non-drug treatment and prevention to decrease or avoid pain