

What is osteoarthritis?

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Answer: Osteoarthritis is commonly considered a “wear-and-tear” process and is associated with degenerative changes in the disc, which results in altered relationship between the vertebrae above or below. The derangement causes an increased strain, as well as a loss of motion of the gliding joints of the spine. These gliding joints (facets) are found in pairs, along the entire spine, and their function is to allow for movement and flexibility of the spine.

Degenerative changes in the disc or an altered function in the facet joints, contribute significantly to the “wear- and-tear” process, placing a strain upon the most important area of the spine. The osteoarthritic spine becomes less flexible and therefore more vulnerable to injury. A simple unexpected or forced movement, physically heavy work, improper posture, frequent bending or lifting can produce strain and injury to the spinal joints.

Signs and symptoms of osteoarthritis include: limited movement in the back, increased pain and stiffness in the morning or after sitting which improves with movement or activity, tightness and cramping in the buttocks and leg muscles, recurrent, frequent bouts of low-back and leg pain, increased leg pain after walking short distances (relieved with rest), dull painfully stiff back, frequent muscle spasms in the low back, numbness, tingling and feeling of weakness into the legs and/or toes, radiating pain into the buttocks, legs and feet, constant painful inability to walk or move without use of some form of support, and other sign and symptoms.

Chiropractic care, which may include spinal adjustments and physical therapy such as ice, heat ultrasound, and electrical stimulation, may help to reduce pain and muscle spasm. It is important to follow the specific instructions of your doctor regarding your work activity, leisure activity, exercise program, weight control, and frequency of treatments in order to achieve optimum relief from your back pain and to help prevent recurrence.

Quote of the week: *“Character is made by what you stand for; reputation, by what you fall for.”* – Robert Quillen