

The Osteoarthritis Handbook

An Essential Guide to Understanding the Most
Common form of Arthritis

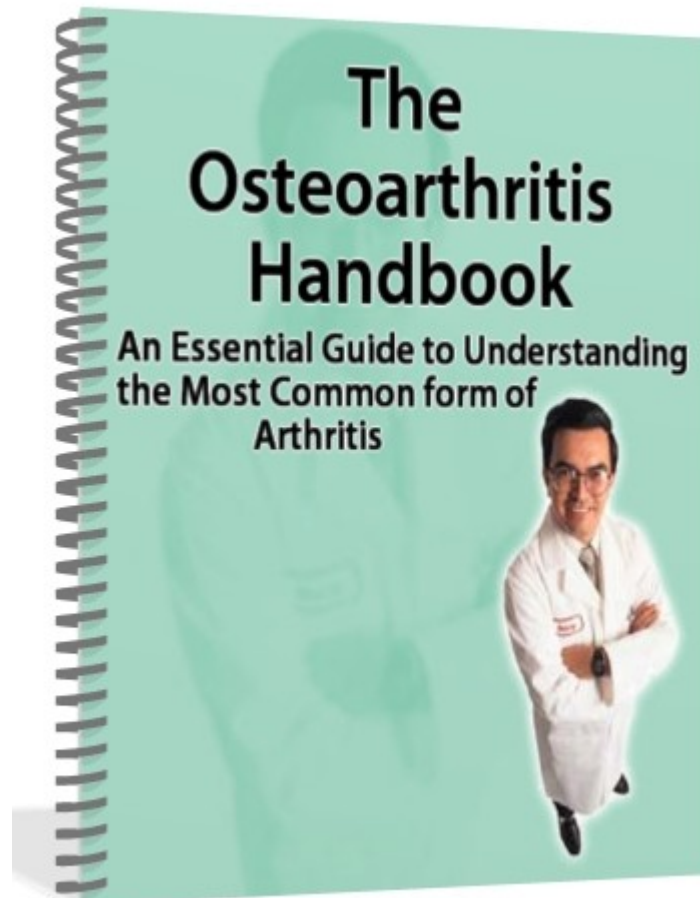


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INTRODUCTION

Thank you for deciding to learn more about the disorder Osteoarthritis. Inside these pages, you will learn what it is, who is most at risk for developing it, what causes it, and some treatment plans to help those that do have it, to feel better.

While there is no definitive "cure" for Osteoarthritis, there are ways in which individuals can improve their quality of life and change the discomfort level to one that can be tolerated on a daily basis.

There are currently more than 100 different forms of arthritis, of which osteoarthritis is just one. Since it is one of the most common forms many people suffer from, it is important to know all the facts associated with it to be sure that you are not someone that is or could suffer from Osteoarthritis.

We hope that you find some of the answers you've been searching for throughout these brief pages and a greater understanding of what you or someone you love may be going through at this very moment.

CHAPTER 1 - WHAT IS OSTEOARTHRITIS?

Osteoarthritis, otherwise known as "degenerative joint disease," is one of the most common forms of arthritis with more than 20 million American sufferers to date.

While most people that suffer from the severe forms of Osteoarthritis are age 60 or higher, this particular disease begins its disabling affects before then. As stated earlier, it is a "degenerative" disease; therefore its effects to our bodies happen over a span of a lifetime. However, some people as young as 25 can experience the same pain as someone 65 in age.

The word "Osteoarthritis" is derived from two words standing for joint and inflammation. So it's easy to see how this disease operates within the human body.

At each point where our bodies have the ability to bend, or the joints, our bones come together divided by small areas that are made up of cartilage. The cartilage acts as a connection point between our bones providing us with a wider range of motion that would not be possible otherwise. We could not walk, bend, sit, or twist; we would be pretty much motionless without the ever important cartilage.

As we age, our cartilage becomes weakened since it is in a state of perpetual use day after day. And, the weaker it becomes, the more prone our "meeting place" bones begin to rub as we bend our arms or legs, causing more and more pain.

The break down or "wear-and-tear" of our cartilage can cause the joint area to change its original shape. When this happens, tiny deposits of bone can form throughout the edges of the joint. These are medically classified as "osteophytes," but you may know them better as "bone spurs."

In addition, small bits of cartilage or bone can break off inside the joints

that float about, often times causing even more damage and of course more pain.

Wherever we can pivot our bodies, we can develop Osteoarthritis. Hands, knees, hips, and the spine are the most common places this disease occurs. Osteoarthritis only affects the joint areas making it painful when performing many simply, daily tasks such as standing, sitting, shaking hands, or walking. Other forms of arthritis such as rheumatoid (the second most common form of arthritis) or lupus affect areas such as the skin, lungs, eyes, liver, or blood vessels.

Osteoarthritis is a chronic disease. Meaning, it develops without any specific reason and continues for lengthy time periods spanning years, even a lifetime. There is no known cure for Osteoarthritis, but there are treatment plans that can lessen the severity of its symptoms for sufferers.

And, because Osteoarthritis has been termed "chronic," the treatment plans may change over the course of time. Some of the available treatments will be outlined further on so you know what can be done to help you deal with the everyday pain.

Now that you know what Osteoarthritis is, let's discuss