

Osteoarthritis of the Spine

Osteoarthritis (spine OA) of the spine is a condition that usually occurs with aging, and is typically diagnosed after age 50. Its causes include injury to the spine, wear and tear on the discs of the spine (often associated with obesity), or an inherited tendency to develop OA. Sometimes the cause is unknown. It may cause pain and stiffness, and make it difficult to bend over, perform weight-bearing activities, such as walking, and accomplish daily tasks, such as dressing and bathing.



Symptoms of spine OA vary from person to person and can range from mild to disabling. You may not have symptoms, even though the condition is present. Its onset and progression can be quite slow. Common symptoms of OA of the spine include:

- Pain in the back or neck.
- Pain that is worse after prolonged inactivity, (removed “on”) getting up in the morning, or after physical activity.
- Pain that worsens with standing and walking, and gets better with sitting or lying down.
- Stiffness after prolonged inactivity, (removed “on”) getting up in the morning, or with movement of the involved area of the spine.
- In a more advanced condition, symptoms that do not improve with rest, and interfere with sleep.
- Pain, burning, or tingling sensations that spread to the shoulder or arm, or to the buttocks or leg.
- Difficulty performing normal daily activities, such as dressing and bathing as well as walking and standing, as the condition progresses.
- Pain caused by the weakening of muscles surrounding the joint, due to inactivity.
- Your physical therapist will help you manage your condition, lessen your discomfort, and get you moving again

HOW A PHYSICAL THERAPIST CAN HELP

Your physical therapist will help you set goals to reduce your symptoms and slow the progression of the disease. Your physical therapist can help with a variety of treatment options, including:

- Exercise (Caution: Please consult your physical therapist or doctor before starting any exercise program.)
- Stretching
- Symptom management
- Daily activity training
- Use of modalities
- Manual therapy
- Balance and walking training
- Specialized braces or taping
- Weight control