

# Osteoarthritis: fact or myth?

MYTH



**Osteoarthritis (OA) only affects older people**

**FACT**

Although OA is more common as you age, it can and does affect people in their twenties and thirties as well. Up to 50% of youth and young adults will develop OA within 10-15 years of a joint injury. This means they have to live with OA longer, which may result in greater disability, and decrease in quality of life. For this reason, young people with a joint injury need to be taught how to reduce their increased risk of OA.

MYTH



**I need an x-ray or MRI to diagnose OA**

**FACT**

There is NOT a strong relationship between OA symptoms (including pain) and the structural joint changes seen on x-rays or MRI scans. In fact, some people's x-rays can show a lot of joint change, but they experience very little pain. This means that relying on information from scans alone can be unhelpful. X-rays, scans or blood tests are only required if the doctor needs to rule out other causes of your joint pain.

MYTH



**More pain = more damage**

**FACT**

Experiencing pain is complex and NOT directly related to the structural changes in your joint. More pain does not mean more structural changes in the joint. Your pain experience is influenced by your emotions, mood, anxiety, stress, poor sleep, fatigue, level of activity, and inflammation at the site.

MYTH



**No matter what I do, my OA will only get worse**

**FACT**

There are positive, active things you can do to help with the pain associated with OA, such as walking and strengthening and balance exercise. Only about a third of people get worse over time and some see an improvement in pain and disability. Most people will experience periods when their pain is better or worse, but it doesn't worsen overall. Your physiotherapist will be able to guide you on how to keep active.

MYTH



**Exercise will damage my joint further**

**FACT**

The opposite is true. Exercise and movement are SAFE and the best defence against OA. They act as a joint lubricant and help keep joints healthy. Many people avoid using their painful joints for fear of making it worse. But, when we don't move our joints, they become more stiff and the muscles become weaker. Talk to your physiotherapist about the right exercises for you.

MYTH



**OA is "wear and tear" or "bone on bone"**

**FACT**

OA is NOT caused by the joint "wearing out" over time due to use. OA is a disease that interferes with how the cartilage in our joints repairs itself. OA is not inevitable and not everyone will develop it as they age.

**Being physically active, strengthening the muscles around the joint and losing weight, if you need to, are the most important things you can do to manage your osteoarthritis.**

**A physiotherapist will be able to advise on the best exercise programme for you.**



**World Physiotherapy**

[www.world.physio/wptday](http://www.world.physio/wptday)



**World PT Day  
2022**

**8 SEPTEMBER**