

# Osteoarthritis: a global problem

## OA IS A LEADING CAUSE OF DISABILITY

**520 MILLION**  **PEOPLE AROUND THE WORLD HAVE OSTEOARTHRITIS (OA)**

  
**60%**  
of all OA cases are for knee OA

In a global study of 291 conditions, hip and knee OA was ranked as the **11th** highest contributor to disability

  
**9.6** million years were lived with disability from OA around the world in 2017

**48%**   
increase in number of people affected globally with OA from 1990 to 2019

### What is osteoarthritis?

OA is the **most common joint condition**. It can affect any moveable joint, most commonly the knees, hips, and hands.

OA is a disease. It may start with a minor or major injury to the joint. Early in the disease process the body has the resources to repair these changes. As the disease progresses, the body's repair system can't keep up and joint tissues start to break down, including cartilage thinning, bone reshaping, bony lumps and joint inflammation.

Despite these changes, the joint can still work normally, without any pain or stiffness.



### OA is characterised by:

- pain
- functional impairments
- muscle weakness
- joint stiffness
- reduced health related quality of life

### What causes OA?

The exact cause of OA is still unclear. Risk factors that increase the risk of OA include:

- having overweight or obesity
- having a previous joint injury, joint surgery and/or history of overuse of the joint
- your genetics (eg a family history of OA)

### OA can be clinically diagnosed without investigations if a person:

- is 45 or over\* and
- has activity-related joint pain and
- has either no morning joint-related stiffness or morning stiffness that lasts no longer than 30 minutes

\* OA can also be diagnosed in people under the age of 45, commonly after a traumatic joint injury



### How can physiotherapy help OA?

Exercise is the first-line treatment for OA. In addition to helping you choose the best exercises, physiotherapists provide advice and education on pain relief and ways to manage OA. They can teach you how to improve your joint movement and your walking, as well as how to strengthen your muscles.

If you need to have a joint replacement, you are also likely to see a physiotherapist before and after the operation. The physiotherapist will help prepare you to get the maximum benefit from the surgery, and help you recover well after surgery.



**World  
PT Day  
2022**

**8 SEPTEMBER**