

Orthopaedic Connection

Hand Arthritis

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Transforming patient information into patient understanding.

Although arthritis can attack any joint in the body, from an appearance standpoint it is most noticeable in our hands. There are many different kinds of arthritis. Two types primarily affect the hands.

Osteoarthritis

Osteoarthritis (OA) is at times called "wear and tear" arthritis. Apparently it is called this because it involves the wearing away of the cushioning material in the joint. This material covers the ends of all our bones and allows joints to move freely without friction.

Wear may result from:

- Genetic i.e. you get it from your parents or grandparents
- Past injuries
- Actual fractures into the joints.

OA occurs most often in the hand at the base of the thumb or the outer joint of the fingers.

Rheumatoid Arthritis

Rheumatoid arthritis or RA as it is known is a disease in which the joint's synovial lining produces enzymes or chemicals that attack and destroy the joint surfaces. It occurs mostly in the wrist and middle joint of the fingers or the knuckles.

Features of RA

- First diagnosed in middle age usually
- Affects women 3 times more than men
- Not inherited like OA
- Genes can be activated by a viral infection causing RA to occur

Signs and Symptoms of both types

- Stiffness and swelling
- Pain and loss of motion
- Bony growths around outer finger joints
- Enlarged joints from tissue swelling
- Often affects both hands

How I Treat It

RA affects many joints in the body besides the hands. Treatment should generally be supervised by a rheumatologist. For OA, symptoms are best treated by Advil or similar. Ice can help. Hand physical therapists can be effective in treating arthritis by various means and sometimes make splints which can help.

Surgery

Surgery can be very helpful in certain cases. It includes:

- Removing bony masses or cysts
- Fusing deformed joints
- Replacing damaged joints

There is much that can be done for arthritic hands and wrists. Because our hands are so important to our everyday function you shouldn't put up with pain and loss of function, because help is available. Just call.

Office Website and Gratiot County Herald Archive

www.orthopodsurgeon.com and Your Orthopaedic Connection provide all the Orthopaedic and musculoskeletal information you need! You can reach the Archive of all GCH previous articles through the Website.

All past articles are listed by title and the complete text is available at the click of a mouse.

All of the information available concerns what I treat daily in the office and hospital. Log on and check it out.

Our goal is simple - To help people return to more pain free, functional lives. I specialize in you.

Good health. Good life. All the best to you.

Be well.

Dr. Haverbush