

Orthopaedic Connection

Women Have More Arthritis

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Transforming patient information into patient understanding.

As an Orthopaedic Surgeon I know that women are more affected by arthritis than men. So far research has not clearly demonstrated the reason for this gender based disparity.

Possible Reasons

- Estrogen limits the damaging effects of inflammation on joint cartilage. Women lose this protection at menopause. In men testosterone also protects bone strength and cartilage and it declines much slower than estrogen does in menopause.
- Women have more lax joints than men. A lack of joint stability can contribute to the development of arthritis.
- Women, being smaller than men, have less thickness of articular cartilage to protect their joints.
- Any joint injury in the past can increase the possibility of arthritis at a later time.
- The angle of a woman's knee where the femur meets the tibia is greater in women than in men which may explain why there are more ACL injuries in women.
- Decreased muscle strength in women may be a factor.
- Excessive weight in men and women places added stress on ligaments and pressure on the joint's articular cartilage.
- Adipose cells produce inflammatory substances that are damaging to chondrocytes, which build and maintain cartilage.
- Women have a higher fat mass relative to muscle mass than men do.

What Can Be Done

Describing the problem is the easy part. Doing something about it is far more difficult.

- Daily walking is fine, but it doesn't do a lot for muscle mass.
- A person needs to focus on strength training in addition to walking.
- Muscle mass is increased through strength training 20 minutes, 3 time per week. You'll need a "strength coach" who knows about this to get you started right.
- Maintain optimal weight. See what I mean by this being the hard part!
- Depression if present seems to not allow any of the above to work.
- If one type of anti-inflammatory medication doesn't work don't give up because some medications are more effective in different people.

Awareness

As an Orthopaedic Surgeon I can fix countless injuries, fractures and arthritis problems for my patients.

In this situation of women and arthritis I can't fix it for you. I have to make you aware of what you can do. There is one thing for sure. Doing nothing is almost a guarantee you are headed for a place you won't like. Sad but true.

Office Website and Gratiot County Herald Archive

Wow! Your window to the Orthopaedic and musculoskeletal world opens at www.orthopodsurgeon.com. It contains the Website Library of information, Your Orthopaedic Connection and GCH archive of all previous articles.

You will be amazed at all the helpful information it contains.

All of the information pertains to everything I treat in the office and hospital.

Be well.

Dr. Haverbush