

Orthopaedic Connection

Arthritis Differences

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Transforming patient information into patient understanding.

Even though the word arthritis is very frequently used in our vocabulary and tens of millions of people have it – it is still greatly misunderstood.

Did you know there are over 100 different kinds of arthritis? I will now begin to discuss each one in detail – NOT!

That would be a good way to lose all of the readers and I don't want that to happen. What I do want is for you to have a good grasp of the two most common kinds of arthritis.

Of the 100 plus types of arthritis there are two that occur most frequently.

Osteoarthritis is the Most Common

Osteoarthritis occurs in a joint when the articular cartilage cushion covering the bone ends begins to wear away. There are several other changes that occur also that will make this too complicated to explain in detail.

Let me give you an example. Think of a new tire. Nice thick tread. When the tread begins to wear down over time. That is what arthritis does in the joint. The articular cartilage is like the tread on a tire.

Women are affected more than men for some unknown reason and arthritis often begins to show after age 50.

Why?

- Normal aging
- Heredity is a factor
- Past joint injuries
- Excessive weight
- Occupations that stress or injure joints repeatedly

There is no cure for osteoarthritis. The focus on treatment is to control pain, stay as active as possible and maintain a healthy weight (which of course all of us know is very difficult).

Tylenol, Ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin) or similar medication, injection therapy, PT and sometimes one of many surgical procedures.

Rheumatoid Arthritis is Very Different

Rheumatoid Arthritis is much more mysterious. It is termed an autoimmune disease. Why does our own immune system change and begin to attack the body's own tissues? Could it be genetic or viruses – no one knows for sure.

Characteristics of RA are –

- Affects the joint lining
- Causes painful swelling leading to bone erosion and deformity
- Affects joints on both sides of the body
- Can occur at any age
- Can attack other body organs
- More common in women

The treatment of RA is much more complicated than OA. Treatment is best managed by a Rheumatologist because the medications used are powerful and have side effects. RA really requires a team approach of treatment including Rheumatology (a subspecialty of Internal Medicine), Physical/Occupational Therapy and sometimes Orthopaedic Surgery, but my specialty plays a much smaller role in management of RA than in OA.

My patients put their trust in me and what I do improves the quality of their lives.

Office Website and Gratiot County Herald Archive

Attention! If my loyal readers want to be as smart as a tree full of owls they will fly to www.orthopodsurgeon.com for tons of musculoskeletal information everyone can use.

You get the Office Website and Library, Your Orthopaedic Connection and GCH archive of every article I have written for you.

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

Be well.

Dr. Haverbush