



OrthoAdvice™

## Don't Let Osteoarthritis Slow You Down

By Matthew Kay, MD

As we age, the cartilage that protects the ends of our bones at our joints begins to wear away, resulting in osteoarthritis (OA). Osteoarthritis is most commonly seen in people over the age of 50 and typically affects the hands, hips, and knees. There are other forms of arthritis, but all forms of this disease ultimately cause the deterioration or destruction of joint cartilage.

If you notice stiffness in the morning and after periods of rest, experience joint pain after activity, or have swelling at the joint, arthritis could be the culprit. One way to know for sure whether it is OA or not is to schedule an appointment with an orthopaedic physician. Osteoarthritis can be diagnosed with X-rays and a physical exam.

Depending on which joint is affected, most patients will start with a conservative approach to see if that will help manage their symptoms. Such nonsurgical treatments include braces, exercise, heat, ice, weight loss, anti-inflammatory drugs, steroid or hyaluronic injections, and physical therapy. Should those options not offer any significant relief, then it may be necessary to consider surgery.

For larger joints like the hips, knees, and shoulders, joint replacement surgery is the most common, long-term treatment choice. Joint replacement surgery can be life-changing and can help you prolong your life by maintaining a higher level of activity. Over the years, we have seen great improvements in the design of implants as well as in the materials used to create them. This has

led to today's joint replacements, which often last up to 20 years.

In the past few years, same-day hip and knee replacement surgery have been on the rise. While this may sound appealing to some, most orthopaedic surgeons, including those at Crystal Clinic, do not currently recommend it. A major surgery like joint replacement requires professional care for an appropriate amount of time, which is typically a one- or two-night hospital stay. We generally recommend that patients go directly home after this brief hospital stay, rather than to an inpatient rehab facility. Arrangements are typically made for home physical therapy until you are mobile enough for outpatient therapy to complete the rehabilitation of your new joint.

Unfortunately, there is no cure for or tried-and-true way to prevent osteoarthritis. What you can do is reduce your risk of developing it, or its rate of progression, if you do. You can do that by exercising and remaining active, maintaining a healthy weight, and eating a balanced diet.

Most of all, be assured that pain from osteoarthritis doesn't have to keep you from enjoying life. Here at Crystal Clinic, we are experts when it comes to treating orthopaedic conditions like OA, as well as other forms of arthritis. There's no one more qualified to evaluate your joint problem than an orthopaedic surgeon. And just because we're surgeons doesn't mean we'll only recommend surgery. We are knowledgeable in a wide range of treatments to help manage your arthritis so it doesn't slow you down.



*Dr. Kay is a board-certified orthopaedic surgeon. He is a graduate of the University of Cincinnati College of Engineering and University of Cincinnati College of Medicine. Dr. Kay served his residency at St. Luke's Hospital, Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland. He specializes in orthopaedic surgery with an interest in total joint replacement surgery, fracture care and orthopaedic surgery of the arms, legs, hands and feet. Dr. Kay sees patients at Crystal Clinic's Kent and Streetsboro locations.*