

OSTEOARTHRITIS AFFECTS WOMEN MORE THAN MEN

Not all segments of the population are affected equally with osteoarthritis (OA). Among people younger than age 45, OA is more prevalent among men. Among those age 45 and above, it is more prevalent among women. Among people with OA, there are twice as many women as men, especially for those with arthritis in the hands and knees. OA symptoms such as joint pain, aching and stiffness typically begin to appear in women in their 40's and 50's, and the disparity becomes even greater after age 55, after women enter menopause.

Some facts you should know about osteoarthritis:

- Women over age 60 were, and still are, almost twice as likely to have OA than men.
- Women are nearly twice as likely as men to develop hand OA.
- Women are 40% more likely to develop knee OA than men.
- OA is the most common cause of disability in adults.

There could be a number of reasons that cause higher number of osteoarthritis in women.

Hormonal Changes

Evidence suggests that hormone levels fluctuate with menstruation cycle may be the reason why women are more susceptible to OA. Increased hormone levels during certain stages of the menstrual cycle may increase joint laxity, which is associated with joint instability and injury that can subsequently contribute to the development of OA.

Menopause

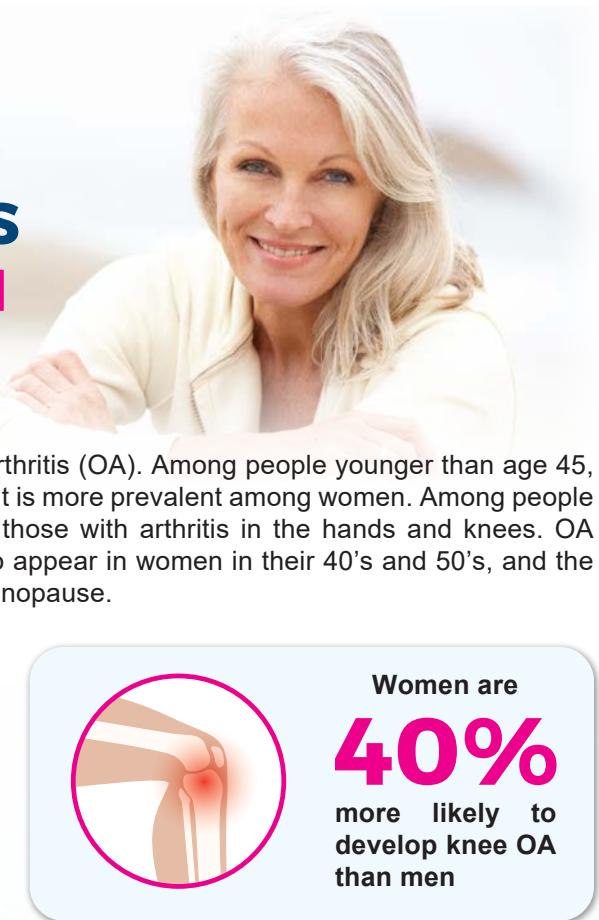
Women have higher risk of developing OA after menopause and women may notice joint pain appears or worsen during menopause. The drop of estrogen levels during menopause may lead to the changes in the body that accelerate the OA process.

Anatomical Differences

Another possible reason is anatomical differences, women's hips are wider than men's. The angle formed by the hip bones being wider than the knees puts more stress on the outside of the knees. This "knock-kneed" position where the knees tilt inward while the ankles remain spaced apart can create added stress on the joints and cause OA over time in some women.

Excess Weight

By far the most important risk factor for OA in women is obesity. Obesity increases the risk of OA because the extra weight will put more stress on weight-bearing joints,



such as hips, knees, and ankles. This stress can lead to damaging frictions between the bones and joints. Moreover, women who are experiencing menopause often gain weight which may explain the rise in OA seen among women aged 50 to 60 years old.

In general, experts are still investigating the exact reasons why women are more likely to get OA. In the meantime, women of all ages should take extra precautions to reduce the risk of developing OA or slow down the progression if already have it, including:

- **Lose Weight.** Achieving and maintaining a healthy weight is important. If you are overweight or obese, losing weight will lessen the risk of further joint injury and increase your mobility.
- **Stay Active.** Exercise is the best treatment for OA. Exercise such as walking, swimming, and physical therapy are generally considered as safe because they help to maintain and build muscle with minimal joint strain.
- **Alternative Therapy.** Glucosamine, chondroitin and methylsulfonylmethane (MSM) are well-known supplements to maintain healthy joints and protect our joints. Evidences show that this combination helps the cartilage to repair, delays the deterioration of cartilage, alleviates joint pain and improves mobility.

Consult your healthcare professionals to find out more how you can maintain and protect your joints.