

## ADVICE SHEET FOR OSTEOARTHRITIS

### WHAT IS OSTEOARTHRITIS

This is a common form of arthritis in which the protective cartilage at the end of the bones wears down. Without cartilage between the joints, this will eventually lead to bone rubbing on bone and can cause damage to the joints of your body.

### WHAT CAUSES OSTEOARTHRITIS

The degeneration of cartilage is due to wear and tear on the joint over time. There are many factors that can increase the risk of osteoporosis. These risk factors include:

- **Heredity:** People can have an inherited joint defect. With a defect in a gene that is responsible for making cartilage, it can lead to defective cartilage. This causes the joints to deteriorate more rapidly.
- **Obesity:** Excess body weight causes additional stress on weight-bearing joints. The more you weigh, the greater the risk for osteoarthritis.
- **Injuries:** Injuries from sports or trauma can increase the risk for osteoarthritis with the corresponding joint. Having a broken bone near a joint is prone to develop osteoarthritis of that joint over time.
- **Age:** The likelihood of osteoarthritis increases with age.
- **Overuse:** Repetitive movements can lead to osteoarthritis. Careers that require constant standing, heavy lifting, or frequent bending can lead to quicker deterioration of cartilage.

### SYMPTOMS

The symptoms of osteoarthritis develop slowly and tend to worsen over time. These symptoms include:

- **Joint pain:** During or after movement.
- **Stiffness:** Joint may be stiff after long periods of inactivity; most noticeable in the mornings.
- **Loss of flexibility:** Full range of the joint may not be possible.
- **Bone spurs:** Hard lumps of extra bone that form on the edges of bones at the affected joint.
- **Grating sensation:** May hear or feel grating of bone on bone when using the joint.

### HOW TO LOOK AFTER IT AT HOME

While the process cannot be reversed, lifestyle changes can greatly help in managing the symptoms.

- **Exercise:** Exercise can help to strengthen the muscles around the joint which can help the joint to be more stable.
- **Lose weight:** Being overweight causes extra stress on the bone, so losing weight can decrease the amount of pressure on the joint and reduce the pain.
- **Heat and Cold Therapy:** Heat can relieve stiffness while cold can relieve muscle spasms and pain.
- **Pain creams:** Over the counter creams can provide temporary relief. Creams can be used to numb the pain by either hot or cold impressions.
- **Assistive devices:** The use of a cane can help to relieve the pressure put on weight-bearing joints.

## PROFESSIONAL TREATMENT

### Physiotherapy:

- **Consult a chartered physiotherapist** to create an exercise program that will strengthen the muscle around the affected joint, increase the range of motion for the joint, and reduce pain.
- **Manual therapy:** Specialized form of physical therapy that is delivered by a hands-on approach. This will allow for relief of joint pain and an increase in movement in the area that is being manipulated.

Surgical procedures can be considered when conventional treatments do not help.

- **Cortisone injections:** Corticosteroid medications can be injected into the affected joint to relieve pain. The number of injections per year is limited due to worsening of joint damage if overly used.
- **Arthroscopy:** The damaged cartilage is cleaned out and tissues are repaired. This type of surgery is most commonly performed on the knee and the shoulder.
- **Joint replacement:** Arthroplasty (joint replacement surgery) allows a surgeon to remove the surfaces of damaged joints and replaces them with plastic and metal pieces so bones are not rubbing against one another.
- **Joint fusion:** When joint replacement is not effective, joint fusion is used to remove the damaged joint and fuse the two bones to each side of the affected joint.

## PREVENTION

You can take steps to help prevent osteoarthritis. These steps include maintaining a healthy weight, being active, and doing the best to protect your joints. If you know a task will cause pain to your joints, then try not to endure that task.