

## **ARTHRITIS OF THE KNEE**

Like other joints that carry your weight, your knees are at risk for "wear and tear" arthritis. The smooth articular cartilage (cushion) that helps your knee joint glide may wear thin. Generally, the pain of arthritis develops gradually, although sudden onset is also possible. The knee may become stiff and swollen, making it difficult to move. Pain and swelling are worse in the morning or after a period of inactivity. Pain may also increase after activities such as walking, stair climbing or kneeling. The pain may often cause a feeling of weakness in the knee, resulting in "locking" or "buckling."

Three basic types of arthritis may affect the knee joint: **1. Osteoarthritis (OA)** is the most common form of knee arthritis. OA is usually a slowly progressive degenerative disease in which the joint cartilage gradually wears away. **2. Rheumatoid arthritis (RA)** is an inflammatory type of arthritis that can destroy the joint cartilage. RA can occur at any age and generally affects both knees. **3. Post-traumatic arthritis** can develop after an injury to the ligaments or cartilage in the knee, or after a fracture.

If you don't get treatment, the condition keeps getting worse until resting no longer relieves your pain. The knee gets stiff and inflamed. Bone spurs might build up at the edges of the joint. When the cartilage wears away completely, bones rub directly against each other. This makes it very painful for you to move. If you become less active to avoid the pain the muscles controlling your joint get weak, and you may start to limp.

**Treatment options:** In its early stages, *arthritis* is treated with nonsurgical measures.

- Lifestyle modifications: losing weight, switching from running or jumping exercises to swimming or cycling, and minimizing activities such as climbing stairs that aggravate the condition.
- Using supportive devices such as a cane, wearing energy-absorbing shoes or inserts, or wearing a brace or knee sleeve can be helpful.
- Other measures may include applications of heat or ice, water exercises, liniments or elastic bandages.

Several types of drugs can be used in treating the symptoms of *arthritis*, and based on individual cases your orthopaedic surgeon will develop program for your specific condition: **1. Anti-inflammatory medications** can include aspirin, naproxen or ibuprofen to help reduce swelling in the joint. **2. Corticosteroids** are powerful anti-inflammatory agents that can be injected into the joint.

**Knee replacement surgery:** If you have advance stages of *arthritis*, your knee joint hurts when you rest at night and/or your knee is severely deformed, your doctor may recommend total or partial knee replacement (arthroplasty). You will get a metallic and plastic implant that will resurface the damaged cartilage, thus improving your pain and ability to walk. You may need a cane for a while after surgery. Rehabilitation is important to restore your knee's flexibility and work your muscles back into shape.