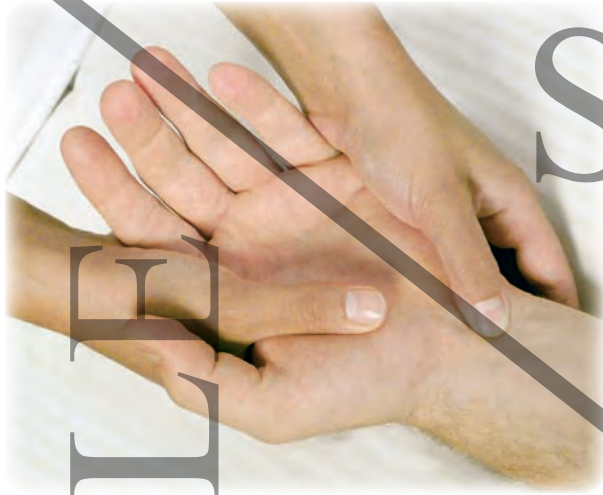




Contraindications

When you are in severe or chronic pain, or a joint becomes deformed, see a health care provider for diagnosis before receiving massage therapy.

Specifically ask the provider if massage might be helpful or possibly harmful.

Tell your massage therapist about any medications you are currently taking. Knowing about your medications will help the massage therapist plan a safe and more effective session to address your needs.

Massage is contraindicated in cases of acute inflammation, but may be beneficial for low level chronic inflammatory situations. Movement of deformed joints should be conservative and performed with care. After joint replacement surgery certain movements are contraindicated, and limitations suggested by orthopedic health care providers should be observed.

References:

Werner, R. (2022) A massage therapist's guide to pathology. 5th Ed. Philadelphia: Lippincott Williams & Wilkins.

Helpful Websites

Arthritis Foundation - www.arthritisfoundation.org

Arthritis.com - www.arthritis.com

Johns Hopkins Arthritis Center - www.hopkinsarthritis.org

Massage Therapy Foundation - www.massagetherapyfoundation.org

This brochure is intended for information only. Contact your physician for diagnosis of medical conditions, and for advice on whether massage might be beneficial for you.

Massage and Osteoarthritis written by

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HP1600-10



Massage & Osteoarthritis

A natural approach



**THERAPEUTIC
MASSAGE**
For a Healthier Life

Healthy Joints

Well-functioning, pain-free joints allow freedom of movement to perform activities of daily living, and to enjoy many of life's simple pleasures. A growing number of osteoarthritis (OA) sufferers are turning to alternative and complementary therapies like massage to manage stiff, painful, and swollen joints, and to maintain the ability to move with ease.

Therapeutic massage offers natural relief from the symptoms of OA, and can be a valuable part of an OA wellness strategy.

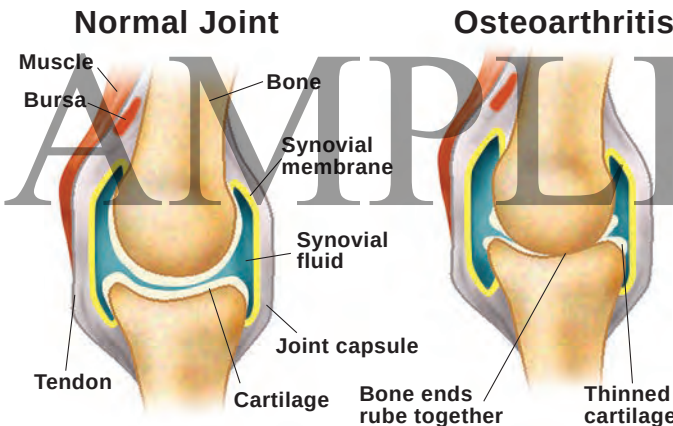
Osteoarthritis

Osteoarthritis is a degenerative joint disease. It is caused by the break down and wearing away of the protective cartilage on the ends of bones that cushions joint movement. People prone to OA include those with a genetic predisposition (it runs in the family), or who repeatedly stress their joints in work, sports, or hobbies. It is also related to past trauma to a joint (for example, an old sports injury or car accident), obesity, and aging.

OA can occur in any joint, but is most common in the hands, hips, knees, neck and lower back. OA at the base of the big toe causes painful bunions.

The primary symptoms of OA include stiff and sore joints, swelling, inflammation, and loss of strength and mobility. Bone spurs can develop around chronically inflamed joints causing further pain and movement limitation. In severe cases, the articular cartilage is completely gone, and bone surfaces rub against each other. The affected joints can become deformed and locked into place.

Muscles that cross painful OA joints tend to hold tension, leading to muscle shortening and cramps. Muscles not used because of joint pain eventually atrophy or waste away, adding to degeneration of joint structures. Without movement, joints deteriorate to the point where they cannot function at all.



The goal of treatment for OA is to reduce pain and inflammation while improving joint mobility. Western medicine commonly treats OA with anti-inflammatory and pain relieving drugs, modified activity, weight loss, physical therapy, and in advanced cases, joint replacement surgery.

Natural Approaches to OA

A growing number of consumers are using natural approaches to managing OA as a complement or alternative to standard medical treatments. The aims of natural remedies are similar to medical treatments, that is, to reduce joint pain and inflammation, minimize further joint deterioration, maintain joint function, and promote ease of movement.

For example, the non-prescription nutritional supplements, glucosamine and chondroitin, offer pain relief for some OA sufferers, and fish oil (omega 3 capsules) or bromelain, a natural enzyme from the pineapple plant can sometimes reduce inflammation.

Overweight people can significantly reduce the effects of OA on knees and feet by even moderate weight loss. Regular exercise strengthens muscular support around joints, and keeps them mobile. Light resistance training with stretch bands increases strength and joint function.

Low impact activities like swimming, stationary bike riding, yoga, and tai chi put less stress on joints than other exercises while keeping the joints moving.

Joint swelling due to OA reduces flexibility and can cause secondary injury due to added pressure to joint tissues. Elevation of the affected limb, and the application of ice (always use a towel; do not apply ice directly to the skin) for 10-15 minutes at a time, help reduce swelling after activity.

Massage for OA

Therapeutic massage, applied with knowledge and care, can be an effective component of an OA management strategy. Massage improves the condition of tissues around and within the joints, as well as enhancing mobility. Specific contributions of massage include the following:

Stroking and Kneading Techniques

- ♦ Reduce fluid accumulation and swelling around joints
- ♦ Increase local blood and lymph circulation to flush out inflammatory by-products
- ♦ Reduce muscle tension in the surrounding area, which relieves pressure on the joint and improves flexibility

Friction Techniques

- ♦ Help prevent and treat fibrosis, or thickening of connective tissues
- ♦ Stimulate collagen production for connective tissue repair
- ♦ Loosen restrictions in ligaments and tendons surrounding the affected joint

Stretching and Mobilizing Techniques

- ♦ Help maintain and improve range of motion in joints
- ♦ Stimulate production of synovial fluid that lubricates joints
- ♦ Improve pliability of surrounding connective tissues

General Massage Effects

- ♦ Relieve pain
- ♦ Reduce anxiety
- ♦ Create feelings of well being