

## What is Causing Your Knee Pain? Osteoarthritis? How to Tell

In knee osteoarthritis, the cartilage in the knee gradually wears away. As the cartilage begins to wear down, the space between the bones decreases and cause bone on bone rubbing. It can also result in bone spurs. Osteoarthritis usually develops slowly. Here are 6 signs and tests for osteoarthritis.

1. A gradual increase in consistent knee pain.
  - a. The pain is felt on most days of the month because the cartilage slowly wears away it is typical for the knee pain to come on slowly. The exception is if a piece of cartilage breaks off and get lodged into your joint. This is like having a pebble in your shoe and can cause immediate and sometimes significant pain.
2. Unexplained swelling of the knee.
  - a. With osteoarthritis this can be due to osteophytes (bone spurs) or bony overgrowth - hard swelling. It can also be due to inflammation which causes extra fluid to accumulate (soft swelling). If the knee feels warm it may be indicative of Rheumatoid Arthritis.
3. Buckling and - or locking of the knee.
  - a. Over time the wearing of the cartilage can cause your knee to be unstable and buckle. As the cartilage erodes it can also create rough surfaces in the knee joint that cause the joint to catch or lock.
4. Popping or cracking sounds (crepitus).
  - a. Again, the wearing of the cartilage creates uneven and rough knee joint surface that can grind and crunch as the knee is being used.
5. Decreased motion of the knee into bending or straightening.
  - a. Bone and cartilage changes can begin to limit the motion of the knee.
6. Loss of knee joint space.
  - a. As the cartilage begins to wear the normal healthy space between the bones that form your knee joint can become narrower. This would be detected by an Xray.
7. Deformity of the knee.
  - a. Bony overgrowth can cause the knee to enlarge or become misshapen. If the knee becomes unstable, it may cause the knee to bow in or bow out.
8. Worse with activity

- a. Stairs or walking up or down hill.
- 9. Knee pain generally relieved with rest.
- 10. Age greater than 50 years old.
- 11. Morning stiffness less than 30 minutes. Longer may be Rheumatoid Arthritis.
- 12. Tender along the joint line.

Tests you can do:

1. Check knee bend. A limitation could be due to arthritis.



2. Check knee straightening. A limitation could be due to arthritis.



3. Have patient squat - popping, grinding, or cracking sound. Not common pop since childhood.



4. Increased pain with squat.
5. Limp with walking.
6. Knee bows in or out on painful side.



#### 7. Patellar grind test

- a. Push down on kneecap while activating quad. Those who reported consistent pain were more likely to lose significant amount of cartilage in upcoming years. Also, more likely to need knee replacement within 6 years.

