

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.

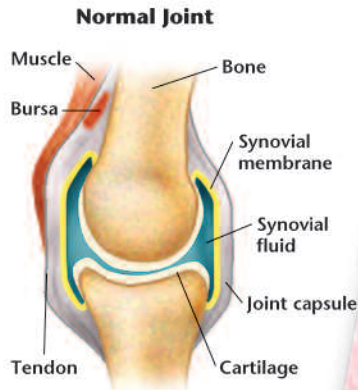
Osteoarthritis

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 tense up, 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 joint where they connect. The goal of treatment for osteoarthritis is to reduce pain and improve function. This can be achieved through a combination of physical therapy, medication, and surgery. In some cases, surgery is necessary to repair or replace the joint.

Natural Approach

A growing number of people are turning to natural approaches to manage osteoarthritis. These include acupuncture, herbal medicine, and massage. Acupuncture involves the insertion of thin needles into specific points on the body. Herbal medicine uses natural plant-based products. Massage involves the manipulation of soft tissues in the body. These natural approaches can help reduce pain and improve function in people with osteoarthritis.

The book cover features a vertical title 'Therapeutic Massage' in a large, stylized font. The main title 'Therapeutic Massage for Osteoarthritis' is prominently displayed. The cover includes a photograph of a woman lying on her back with her eyes closed, receiving a massage on her neck and shoulder. Below this is a smaller photo of hands massaging a person's back. A white silhouette of a human figure is overlaid on the right side of the cover.