

## Arthritis

### Types of arthritis

Osteoarthritis - This is the most common type of arthritis. It occurs as we all get older as the cartilage between the bones, that acts to provide cushioning, deteriorates. This can occur in many joints or in certain joints from overuse, increased load bearing, or other reasons. As the cartilage deteriorates bones contact adjacent bones and cause pain as the joint moves or attempts to move.

Rheumatoid Arthritis - This is a systemic process that occurs throughout the body and can commonly affect the joints in your feet and ankles. This occurs as the body's cells malfunction and attack healthy joints. This routinely causes inflammation of the joint synovium of the hands and feet causing swelling and irritation in the joints. In addition to damage to the joints and cartilage, this disease can also lead to damage to the bones near the joints over time.

Post-Traumatic Arthritis - This type of arthritis occurs after an injury to a joint of the feet or ankles. This is similar to osteoarthritis in that the cartilage is damaged and wears down leading to "bone-on-bone" contact and pain. Post-traumatic arthritis often develops years after an injury to a joint. The injury could be as severe as a fracture that required surgical correction or as minor as a sprain that you might have sustained in a backyard softball game.

### Symptoms

Painful or decreased range of motion - When patients have arthritis motion of the affected joint is often painful. This is due to the decreased cartilage that is designed to give cushioning to the bones so that they are not touching. When there is no cartilage the bones rub on each other and that rubbing can be painful. Over time spurs develop that limit the range of motion of the joints causing them to become stiff. Depending on the joint that is affected, patients can see a prominence or a bump in the area of the spur.

Difficulty walking "normally" - When there is decreased range of motion of a joint patients have to compensate by making modifications to their normal gait patterns. This can cause an increase of pain in other areas because of the increased stress on other tendons and joints. Over time if there is decreased motion in a joint, the surrounding joints are forced to "work harder" than they usually have to causing acceleration of arthritis in those joints.

Swelling of the Joints - As the bones of the arthritic joints contact each other there is inflammation that develops in the joints. This is sometimes noticeable to the patient as swelling around the joints.

### Diagnosis

When you present to the doctors at Hosey Foot and Ankle Center, we will obtain x-rays to visualize the level of degeneration at the joints. We will perform a thorough physical exam to determine the extent of the strength, pain, and range of motion of the affected joints.

### **Non-Surgical Treatments**

There is no cure for arthritis however there are ways to limit the pain that is associated with this problem.

Medications - Oral medications such as NSAIDs can help to decrease the inflammation in and around arthritic joints. This helps to control the level of the inflammation and pain.

Orthotics - these are inserts that the doctors at Hosey Foot and Ankle Centers create from molds of your feet that help to place her feet in the correct position and to limit the pathological motion that occurs at the joints in the foot.

Bracing - Depending on the joints that are affected, bracing can be a good treatment for arthritis. Bracing limits motion at the joints thereby limiting the pain associated with motion at the joint. Our doctors can help to select the appropriate brace for your specific problem.

Steroid Injections - Because arthritis causes an inflammatory reaction in the joints, anti-inflammatory injections can help to decrease or eliminate the pain and inflammation due to the arthritis.

### **Surgical Treatment**

sometimes arthritis is severe enough to warrant surgical correction when it does not respond to conservative treatments above. The specific surgical treatment for each patient is dependent on the type of arthritis as well as a joint that is affected. The doctors at Hosey Foot and Ankle Centers are trained in the latest surgical techniques for arthritis of all of the joints in the foot and ankle and will help to selectively appropriate treatment for you.

For further information on specific procedures please go to the section that discusses these procedures.