



Ask Dr. Michael The Pain Expert



Dr. Michael Clifford

“Wear and Tear”

My lower back is so painful and stiff in the morning I can barely walk, but I’ve been told it’s just “wear and tear”. What does that mean? Nancy L.

The expression “wear and tear” is a term for a common but serious condition known as degenerative joint disease (DJD), or osteoarthritis. It is a degenerative condition that results from the progressive wearing down of the protective cartilage that cushions the ends of your bones. The normally slippery surface of the cartilage that allows for smooth movement of the joint becomes rough over time, and can eventually deteriorate to the point where there is nothing but bone rubbing against bone. Any joint can be damaged, but the joints in the hands, neck, lower back, knees and hips are most often affected.

Symptoms of Degenerative Joint Disease

Symptoms of DJD develop slowly and get worse over time. They include joint tenderness and pain during or after activity, stiffness, especially when first arising in the morning, and loss of flexibility. There may be a grating sensation when the joint is used, and bone spurs may develop around the affected joint. The symptoms of pain and stiffness may become so severe that your ability to work and perform daily tasks may become impaired.

Risk Factors for Developing Degenerative Joint Disease

Risk factors for developing DJD include aging, particularly in women; congenital joint or cartilage defects; joint injuries caused by sports or accidents; obesity, as it adds stress to weight bearing joints such as the knee; and occupations that put repetitive stress on a particular joint. Certain diseases can also increase the risk of DJD, such as diabetes, gout, and underactive thyroid.

Treatment for Degenerative Joint Disease

Degenerative joint disease is incurable, but the symptoms of pain and stiffness may be alleviated, joint mobility and function increased, and the progression of the disease slowed or arrested, and these are the primary goals of treatment. Recommended therapies include chiropractic adjustments and joint mobilization, physiotherapy, neuromuscular therapy, muscular rehabilitation and spinal decompression. In addition, pain relieving modalities such as ultrasound, heat, and interferential therapy, are beneficial. Aerobic exercises, stretching and posture improving exercises are also recommended, and a program of weight loss if necessary.

Dr. Michael Clifford is a U.S. Board Certified Chiropractic Physician, Physiotherapist and Chiropractic Sports Physician, and founder of *Haven Chiropractic Advanced Pain Relief and Family Wellness Care*. Galways Lane, Douglas, Cork.
havenchiropractic@aol.com www.havenchiropractic.ie.

Call today for a pain consultation. 021 485 7669