

Boulder Office

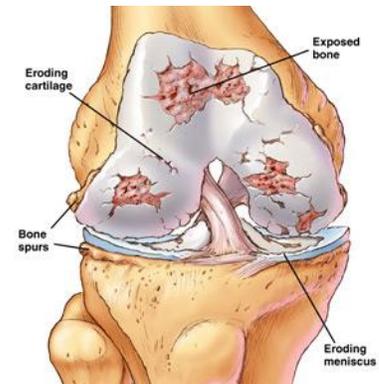
5387 Manhattan Circle #200
Boulder, CO 80303

Steamboat Office

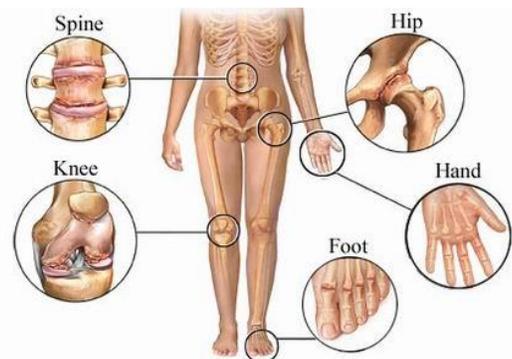
940 Central Park Drive
Steamboat Springs, CO 80487

Osteoarthritis

- Definition:** Also known as “degenerative joint disease,” or simply, “arthritis,” is a progressive condition involving damage to the bones and cartilage that may lead to varying degrees of pain in the affected joint. It is the most common form of joint pain.
- Cause:** Osteoarthritis is caused by wear and tear over time. By age forty, 90% of people will have some evidence of arthritis on x-ray in weight bearing joints (i.e., knees and hips), although most people will not have symptoms until later in life, if at all. Osteoarthritis is highly associated with age, obesity, and previous injury to the affected joint.



- Symptoms:** Onset is usually slow and insidious. There may be short term stiffness of the affected joints and pain with activity or motion that is relieved by rest. In severe cases, there may be deformity of the affected bones or joints.
- Diagnostics:** The patient's medical history and a physical examination are very important in differentiating osteoarthritis from other forms of joint problems, such as rheumatoid arthritis. Sometimes blood work and imaging are helpful in confirming the diagnosis, as well as the severity.
- Treatment:** Symptom severity and quality of life are what help dictate treatment. Minor to moderate symptoms can be treated with exercise, physical therapy, weight loss (if weight bearing joints are affected), and NSAIDs (ibuprofen, naproxen, etc.). Injections of corticosteroids can be extremely helpful in cases resistant to the conservative treatments mentioned above. Hyaluronic acid (Hyalgan, Synvisc, etc.) can also be injected for knee osteoarthritis with good results. For severe cases, surgery may be an option. This can range from arthroscopic repair to total joint replacement.



- Red Flags:** Pain at rest, pain at night, rapid onset of severe pain, and/or disability indicate a need for quick evaluation.