



Numbness

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What Causes Numbness With Osteoarthritis?

The most common symptom of OA is a deep achy joint pain, which is usually aggravated by using the joint or changes in weather condition, and ameliorated with rest. Some swelling of the affected area can also be noted.

The pain and inflammation limits the mobility of that joint, and therefore you may feel your joints stiff, less flexible. Some bony lumps can occur in the hands, being known as Heberden's nodules (at the end of the fingers) or Bouchard's nodes (on the middle joints of the fingers).

If the arthritic changes put pressure on a nerve (i.e. neck or lower back), you can experience numbness and tingling in the hands, or legs respectively. Therefore, if you experience numbness (with or without tingling) it simply means that a nerve is affected by the arthritic changes in your bones.

Tips to Manage Numbness

1. See your doctor to get the right diagnosis and find out if the numbness is indeed caused by OA, or if there is another underlying problem. While physical examination, medical history and X-ray can help to diagnose OA, these procedures and tests can't tell you much about the nerves. A consultation with a neurologist, EMG tests and MRI could give a better idea how your nerves are affected.
2. If the numbness is caused by OA, getting the optimal treatment for this condition may improve the numbness as well. OA treatment includes medication (in some cases surgery, too), and physical therapy.
3. Exercise regularly, to keep your bones healthy, your muscles strong, and the joints flexible and less inflamed. It can also help you lose any extra pounds, which otherwise would put additional pressure on your joints. A well designed arthritis exercise plan should include strengthening exercises (using weights or elastic bands), aerobic exercises (i.e. walking, jogging), range of motion exercises (to keep your joints limber) and balance exercises (i.e. yoga or tai chi). If your joints are swollen, you may need to take anti inflammatory drugs (NSIADs) to make the exercise easier, and ice the joints afterwards- make sure you talk to healthcare professional before starting to exercise.
4. Weight control is best achieved with a combination of exercise and diet. Adopt a healthy, clean diet based on fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains, lean meats and fish, healthy oils, nuts and fish. Processed foods are loaded with unhealthy fats and refined sugar, which promote inflammation and massive weight gain.
5. The stress on your joints can be improved by taking rest when you need, use special foot wear and assistive devices. Other beneficial treatments include: heat and /cold applications and transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation (TENS) and are usually used during a physiotherapy treatment. Massage and acupuncture had been found helpful for managing OA, but don't forget to tell the practitioner about your OA and the symptoms you experience.
6. Avoid stress. Numbness, and other OA symptoms are often aggravated by emotional (and not just the physical) stress. Try deep breathing, meditation or yoga.