

Arthritis

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Arthritis is a word that many patients hear from their doctors all the time, but what is arthritis? Arthritis is the inflammation of a joint, which is characterized by redness, swelling, heat, pain, and decreased movement. There are many different types of arthritis, but only two are very common. These are osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis. Both of these types cause pain and stiffness but they differ in who gets the disease and where the pain is located.

Osteoarthritis

The most common type of arthritis is called osteoarthritis. This type of arthritis usually begins over the age of 40 and affects over forty million Americans. It is known as “wear and tear” arthritis because it is a result of the breakdown of cartilage due to trauma and overuse. Cartilage is the portion of the joint that cushions the ends of the bones during movement. The cartilage breakdown causes bones to rub against each other causing pain, loss of joint movement, stiffness, and cracking or crunching sounds. Osteoarthritis is most common in the hands, knees, hips, and spine.

Osteoarthritis in the spine can be a sign of misalignment of the spinal bones. It can often be a result of an old injury, such as auto accident or sports injury as well. On x-rays bony outgrowths (osteophytes) are visible and are seen sticking out from the bones. Osteophytes are the body’s attempt to stabilize or make the joint stronger. The combination of osteophytes and bone misalignment can cause the spinal nerves to become pinched, which causes pain.

Rheumatoid Arthritis

Rheumatoid arthritis (RA) is another type of arthritis. RA is a serious disease in which the immune system attacks the joints. This attacking causes deformity, severe pain, and inflammation. RA tends to occur earlier in life, usually between 25 and 30. Multiple joints are more commonly affected, and usually both sides of the body at the same time are affected.

Treatment

Both types of arthritis can cause much pain and discomfort. There are things which can be done to relieve the pain and improve joint function. Chiropractic has been shown to improve joint functioning and decrease pain, especially in the spine and hips. Heat, ice, stretching, and exercises can also be used to decrease stiffness. It is important for people who are suffering from arthritis to learn what to do to protect their joints because joint health is critical to overall health and wellbeing. You don’t have to live with arthritis pain. Find out how chiropractic care can help.