



Osteoarthritis and the Feet.

What is it?

Osteoarthritis (OA) is a disease of the joints. The two bones of a joint are normally protected by smooth, cushioning material called cartilage.

Osteoarthritis is often thought of as a 'wear and tear' disease. It causes the cartilage on the end of your bones to get rougher and thinner. The bone underneath makes up for this by thickening and growing outwards, creating outgrowths (osteophytes). These can make your joint appear knobby. The capsule around the joint also thickens and becomes inflamed.

Why did I get it?

Usually due to repetitive movement (also known as "wear and tear"). It can also begin as the result of an injury. Either way, with osteoarthritis there's erosion of the cartilage, the part of the joint that covers the ends of the bones.

Here are some factors that may increase your risk of developing OA:

- Age & Gender
- Joint injury or overuse caused by physical labour and sports
- Obesity
- Joint Alignment



Symptoms:

People with osteoarthritis in the foot or ankle experience, in varying degrees, one or more of the following:

- Pain and stiffness in the joint
- Swelling in or near the joint
- Difficulty walking or bending the joint

Some patients with osteoarthritis also develop a bone spur (a bony protrusion) at the affected joint. Shoe pressure may cause pain at the site of a bone spur, and in some cases, blisters or calluses may form over its surface. Bone spurs can also limit the movement of the joint.

How is it Diagnosed?

Clinical examination of affected joints, history taking and confirmation through an x-ray.

Treatment

Our aim is to reduce the pathological forces that caused the degeneration:

- Footwear education/modification
- Orthotic therapy
- Stretching
- Dry needling
- Padding/strapping

Prognosis

OA cannot be reversed but pain levels can be decreased and controlled. In some cases surgery is needed if other conservative options have failed.