Arthritis - Degenerative, Osteoarthritis

You have osteoarthritis. This is the wear and tear arthritis that comes with aging. It is also called degenerative arthritis. This is common in people past middle age. It is caused by stress on the joints from living. The large weight bearing joints of the lower extremities are most often affected. The knees, hips, back, neck, and hands can become painful, swollen, and stiff. This is the most common type of arthritis. It comes on with age, carrying too much weight, and from injury.

Treatment includes resting the sore joint until the pain and swelling improve. Crutches or a walker may be needed for severe flares. Only take over-the-counter or prescription medicines for pain, discomfort, or fever as directed by your caregiver. Local heat therapy may improve motion. Cortisone shots into the joint are sometimes used to reduce pain and swelling during flares.

Osteoarthritis is usually not crippling and progresses slowly. **There are things you can do to decrease pain:**

- Avoid high impact activities.
- Exercise regularly.
- Low impact exercises such as walking, biking and swimming help to keep the muscles strong and keep normal joint function.
- Stretching helps to keep your range of motion.
- Lose weight if you are overweight. This reduces joint stress.

In severe cases when you have pain at rest or increasing disability, joint surgery may be helpful. See your caregiver for follow-up treatment as recommended.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You have severe joint pain.
- Marked swelling and redness in your joint develops.
- You develop a high fever.

Document Released: 12/18/2006 Document Re-Released: 04/18/2009
ExitCare® Patient Information ©2011 ExitCare, LLC.