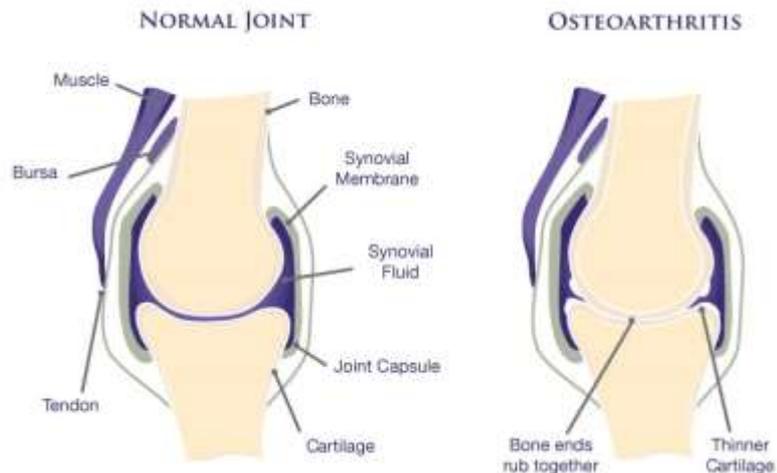


OSTEOPATHY AND OSTEOARTHRITIS

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Osteoarthritis is the medical terminology for degenerative changes to joints – commonly referred to as “wear and tear”. A third of people over 45 in the UK have sought treatment for osteoarthritis symptoms.

With **Osteoarthritis** there is loss of the cartilage within the joint and the surrounding bone thickens and enlarges. This can cause the formation of Osteophytes (new bone). There is a reduction in the production of synovial fluid (joint lubrication and nourishment) and the surrounding ligaments shorten and lose some of their flexibility. Therefore, in



Osteoarthritis the space within the joints narrows resulting in loss of joint function and the pain is associated with inflammation in the bone and surrounding soft tissue.

The causes of **Osteoarthritis** can be related to obesity, previous sports injuries, inactivity, genetic predisposition, developmental problems, dietary factors, increasing age and abnormal strain patterns in the legs. The signs and symptoms of **Osteoarthritis** generally consist of:

- Pain and morning stiffness lasting less than 1 hr – usually relieved by movement;
- Pain relieved by rest;
- Pain on palpation of the joint;
- Joint swelling;
- Increased heat from the affected joint;
- Crepitus (crackling sound upon movement);
- Joint deformities;
- Muscle weakness and atrophy surrounding the joint.

The joints most commonly affected by **Osteoarthritis** are the load-bearing joints and those that involve repetitive movements:

- Hips
- Knees
- Ankles
- Toes – especially the big toe
- Fingers – especially the thumb
- Lower part of the cervical spine (neck)
- Lower part of the lumbar spine (low back)

Osteopaths spend a large amount of time dealing with the pain and suffering of **Osteoarthritis**. Although there is no cure, many people mistakenly assume that it is untreatable and that they must learn to live with their symptoms. However, in many cases, osteopaths are able to help considerably.

The best treatment is prevention but unfortunately by the time most people come to see me they are already in trouble and suffering with a fair amount of pain and loss of function. **Osteopathic treatment for Osteoarthritis** focusses on improving quality of life by reducing pain, improving range of movement in the joints and reducing the rate of degeneration.



Your treatment is likely to incorporate a combination of techniques suited to your specific needs and would include massage, muscle stretching, joint mobilisations and a muscle-strengthening programme. Education and life-style advice is also important, particularly with regards to weight reduction.

Osteopathic treatment can complement more conventional forms of treatment. It is fine to have treatment even if your doctor is also treating you with medication or if you are already seeing a physiotherapist.

Dan Trussler is a registered osteopath at the Ashfield Practice in Chippenham. He graduated with a Masters degree in Osteopathy, after previously gaining a First Class Honours degree in Sport & Exercise Science. In addition to his experience in treating a broad range of musculoskeletal problems in people of all ages and walks of life, Dan brings a wealth of experience to the team in terms of rehabilitation and exercise prescription.

