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Arthritis of the Spine

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WHAT IS ARTHRITIS?

The term arthritis comes from the Greek "arthros," which means a joint and its attachments, and "-itis" which means inflammation. Arthritis is a term that collectively describes a variety of diseases causing pain, tenderness, stiffness, and swelling in the joints, as well as abnormalities in various soft tissues of the body. Nearly 50 million Americans suffer from various forms of arthritis. Arthritis also contributes to the majority of all physical disabilities.



In the United States, approximately 90 percent of people over the age of 65 deal with some form of arthritis, and it is estimated that by the year 2020, over 60 million people will suffer from this often-debilitating problem.

Types of Arthritis: Osteoarthritis

There are many types of arthritis, but the most common, most painful, and most frequently disabling type of arthritis is osteoarthritis.?

"Osteo-" means "bone," and this type of arthritis mostly affects the weight-bearing joints, such as the hips and knees, as well as joints in the hands, feet, and spine. A healthy joint is a hinge at the end of bones and is usually coated by cartilage and lubricated by synovial fluid. Normally, joints move easily with very little friction, but natural degeneration of the joint can cause the cartilage to become rough and worn out. This can result in joint halves rubbing against one another, causing inflammation, the formation of bone spurs, stiffness, and pain. Furthermore, the lubricating synovial fluid of the joint may become thin and the joint's synovial lining can become inflamed.

Up to 30 million Americans suffer from osteoarthritis, mostly women and typically those over 45 or 50 years old. This condition appears to affect all races equally.

Osteoarthritis may be associated with [degenerative disc disease](#), a gradual deterioration of the shock-absorbing discs between the vertebrae of the spine), and is even confused with it in some cases. This is because osteoarthritis and degenerated discs are often found together. However, these are two separate conditions.

Type of Arthritis: Spinal Arthritis

Arthritis can affect any joint in the body, including the joints in the spine. Generally speaking, [spinal arthritis](#) occurs in the [facet joints](#) (also called vertebral joints). These joints connect vertebrae together and are located in the posterior (rear) portion of the spine. Facet joints facilitate movement in the spine such as bending, twisting, and stretching, but these joints can thicken and harden with age, which can lead to arthritis. Being diagnosed with

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Contact us today to have your questions answered.

Phone

Best Time to Call

Have you been in pain for 6 months or more?

Yes No

Have you seen an orthopedic or neurosurgeon who has recommended that you have surgery to correct your condition?

Yes No

Have you had an MRI or CT scan in the last 5 years?

Yes No

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arthritis of the spine typically means that there has been a cartilage breakdown on facet joints, which can cause slight to severe pain. This pain can potentially radiate to other areas of the body such as the buttocks or upper thighs. The facet joints can become inflamed, and progressive joint degeneration creates even more frictional pain. The resulting back pain can decrease back motion and flexibility while standing, sitting, and even walking.

The Arthritis / Bone Spur Connection

Over the years, [bone spurs](#) (small, irregular bone growths also called osteophytes) may form on the facet joints and even around the spinal vertebrae. Bone spurs typically grow in response to bone-on-bone friction in the spine. How does this friction occur? As arthritis develops and cartilage wears away, the ends of facet joints are exposed and begin to rub directly against one another, and bone spurs form. Bone spurs also may develop as the soft discs located between the vertebrae become thin and collapse with age. Spaces between the vertebrae narrow, and eventually, adjacent vertebrae may rub together, causing bone spurs to form along the edges of the vertebrae.

Bone spurs are a natural response to joint instability – essentially, they are the body's attempt to help return stability to the joint. Yet, while bone spurs might be intended to improve joint stability, this enlargement of the normal bony structure actually indicates degeneration of the spine.

Bone spurs are a normal part of the aging process and do not necessarily cause pain. However, they may become so large that they cause irritation or compression of nerves passing through spinal structures. This narrowing of nerve passageways in the spinal column is a condition known as [spinal stenosis](#).

What to Do Next...

Be sure to look at our arthritis [symptoms](#) page if you suspect your chronic back pain is the result of spinal arthritis. This page has detailed information provided by Laser Spine Institute's staff of experts.

Knowing what causes back problems is one of the best ways to avoid them. Educating yourself on the [causes of arthritis of the spine](#) can help you avoid activities that might result in back pain and ensure your spine stays healthy and strong for years to come.

Treatment Options

Has your doctor already diagnosed you with arthritis of the spine? Have conservative treatment methods failed to bring you pain relief? Are you frustrated that you can't live your normal active lifestyle because of the restrictions your back pain places on you? If so, visit our page dedicated to [arthritis of the spine treatment](#). There, you can find out how our minimally invasive procedures can help you rediscover your life without neck and back pain.

Also, be sure to visit our [arthritis of the spine FAQ](#) page if you are having trouble finding answers to your questions. On this page, we have answered many of the most commonly asked questions.

Please note: Laser Spine Institute currently does not perform endoscopic procedures on the thoracic spine.

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Arthritis of the Spine Resources

- [Aging](#)
- [Alternative Treatments](#)
- [What Causes Arthritis of the Spine?](#)
- [What Are the Symptoms of Arthritis of the Spine?](#)
- [What Should I do if I Think I Have Spinal Arthritis?](#)



Laser Spine Institute makes the Inc. 500/5000 list for 2010! In 2010, Inc. Magazine honored Laser Spine Institute with inclusion in its 500/5000 list of the fastest-growing, private companies as determined by number of employees and revenue growth over the last three years. Laser Spine Institute ranked No. 1,140 overall and No. 82 in the healthcare category.



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Individual spine conditions, treatment and recovery times may vary. Each patient's experience with endoscopic spine surgery will differ. All surgical procedures involve some level of risk. If directed to pursue surgery by your physician, prompt advice is advised, as waiting may reduce the efficacy of surgical treatment. Some patients may require an experience that exceeds five days and others may require as few as four days. Patients may be required to rest 48 hours postsurgery. These procedures are reserved for those patients medically cleared and scheduled for endoscopic treatment. Paid spokesperson(s) for Laser Spine Institute results may not be typical. Laser Spine Institute requires each surgeon to complete an extensive Laser Spine Institute training program. MRI reviews are preliminary, and some patients' individual medical conditions may require additional testing that Laser Spine Institute will facilitate through a third-party service provider. Diagnostic procedures in Philadelphia and Oklahoma City are facilitated by Laser Spine Institute through a third-party provider.

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