Your Journey with Hand and Wrist Osteoarthritis

For more information scan this QR code or go to myhealth.alberta.ca/hand-and-wrist-oa-pathway

Osteoarthritis is the most common type of arthritis. While osteoarthritis can occur anywhere in the body, this pathway focuses on osteoarthritis in the hands and wrists. Although hand and wrist osteoarthritis impacts people differently, common symptoms include pain, tenderness, and loss of function (for example, you can no longer do all the things you used to do with your hands).
You are the most important part of your healthcare team. This guide will help you to know what to expect as you work with your team to manage and treat osteoarthritis in the hand and wrist. If you have any questions along the way, please ask your healthcare team.

Before your appointment

- Write down how you feel, your symptoms, and any questions or concerns.
- Consider how your symptoms change over the day and with certain activities. Is there anything that makes your symptoms better or worse?
- Prepare to share any treatments you have tried and whether they have helped.
- Consider bringing a family member or friend to support you.

Visit your healthcare provider

- Your healthcare provider may ask questions about the symptoms you are experiencing and how they impact your day-to-day life.
- To better manage your health condition, your healthcare provider needs to hear from you and understand who you are and what matters to you.
- Share all your symptoms and concerns. Your health includes physical, emotional, spiritual, financial, and social elements.
- Your provider may examine your hands. They may ask about pain and tenderness and look for any signs of swelling or other changes.

Whole-person health

Get your tests

- Your healthcare provider may ask you to go for an x-ray of your hands and wrists.
- You may be asked to go for a blood test if your healthcare provider needs more information.

Review your test results

- You may find your test results on MyHealth Alberta Account or MyChart (myhealth.alberta.ca/account) or ask your healthcare provider to print them for you
- It is important to talk with your healthcare provider to help you understand your test results and how they will healp your team and you decide what to do next.

Review your treatment & management options

- Non-surgical options are tried first to see if they help with your symptoms, like:
  - Resting, changes to your activities, assistive devices and splinting
  - Medicines (topical or oral)
- Decide with your healthcare provider what will work best for you.

Talk with your healthcare provider about a referral

- You may be referred to a surgeon for assessment and to discuss options. Ask who you are being sent to and what they do, how long it may take to be seen, and what to do if you don't hear back.
- Referral to a surgeon is based on your symptoms, impacts on your day-to-day life, and how you respond to non-surgical treatment.
- Surgery can help with pain but doesn't usually improve mobility.

Keep taking care of yourself

- Write down any changes you notice in your symptoms and talk with your healthcare provider if you have new symptoms or a new mass.
- Look for other healthy lifestyle resources and supports.

Important Tips:

Need a family doctor?
ahs.ca/findaprovider

Need a translator?
Let your healthcare provider know

Need health advice?
Call Health Link at 811

Need to find programs and services in your community?

Call 211 or visit ab.211.ca

Primary Care Alberta

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