

OSTEOARTHRITIS

Osteo-arthritis is an inflammation of the joints due to infectious, metabolic or constitutional changes. There may be joint, ligament and/or muscle wear and tear. Other possible symptoms include cartilage loss, bony changes such as sclerosis, cysts, or rigidity, pain, stiffness and impaired function. All can lead to altered body mechanics which then leads to stress. There is a genetic predisposition to the condition.

ANNAMAYA KOSHA:

All symptoms of Arthritis lead to pain and physical stress. There is a decrease in blood flow in the circulatory system that can cause immobility, atrophy, a decrease in nutrients reaching the joints and retention of the waste products. Within the endocrine system, there is an increase in adrenaline, increase in action in the thyroid, decrease in eventually gland function. This is a response to stress. The breathing becomes shallow and tight. The digestive systems also responds to stress and becomes less efficient. The efficiency of the immune system decreases, as is the case in the autoimmune disorder of Rheumatoid Arthritis. The nervous system is under great stress and there may be mechanical nerve injury.

The separation is seen in the lack of awareness of the physical body: posture, alignment, and damaging activities at work and play.

PRANAMAYAKOSHA:

The effects of osteoarthritis in terms of this kosha are manifested in its limitation of mobility, stiffness and pain. Certain joints becomes frozen and immovable both physically and energetically. One feeds the other. These areas become areas of disease rather than well-being. Breath is diminished as a result of immobility—this being a mover of prana.

Concerning the Doshas, one would see the Vata as prominent as bones and joints are less stable and more prone to injury. Vata imbalance is very dry. Pitta's fire may be reflected in the joint destruction and pain. Kapha elements are earth and water and may be seen as heavy and lacking fluidity.

MANOMAYA KOSHA:

Arthritis sufferers may initially feel anger, emotional restriction and inflexibility and emotional stress. With the onset of arthritis one may also feel helplessness, depression, defensiveness, insecurity and withdrawal. These emotions may be due to pain, body stress, the inability to do the activities of daily living, a loss of identity and the family interaction may be strained.

The separation occurs as our emotions are held in our body. If we are unaware of how our emotions affect our bodies, this is separation. We may incur poor posture, poor body mechanics and often other physical ailments.

WITNESS BODY/WITNESS:

A person whose wisdom body exhibits Arthritis will have an attitude somewhat of a workhorse. They lose connection with the deeper meaning of life. They are not in touch with their body, mind or emotions. The physical body is a machine. They may feel pain and discomfort but do not allow it to stop them. They are led by the mind. The separation is that a person with Arthritis may support the condition with their attitude and their attitude supports the condition. The cycle is in place.

ANANDAMAYA KOSHA:

Culturally fixed attitudes of intellectualizing, workhorse mentality and fatalism all play into this kosha. Most prominent is the asmita (ego), raga (attachment/desire) and dvesha (fear). There is a separation in the lack of awareness of who you are and what your relationship to source is (avidya).

TECHNIQUES:

Yoga helps break the cycle of pain. We recondition our belief patterns. We gain strength, flexibility, confidence, a sense of security, correct alignment and increase in range of motion. Yoga nidra allows us to explore our emotions. Guided Imagery heals painful emotions after we examine them.

Use a gentle hatha yoga with supports and props as necessary. Warm up well before asanas. Stretch gently to release muscle tension, loosen tight fascia and wake up the flexibility. Aim for stability and alignment that can be effortless. Balance opposing muscle groups. Incorporate plenty of breath work. Self massage may be very helpful.

One would like to begin by moving the body from the inside out using the vehicle of pranayama. Not only moving the skeletal muscular structure, but the fluids—the lymph, blood and glandular. Just as those with Osteoarthritis benefit from exercising in the water due to the buoyancy and fluidity of movement. This may move and heal the brittle dryness that has brought energy to a stagnant place.

Joint Mudra (p.132 in Yoga in Your Hands). Right hand: thumb and ring fingers together. Left hand: thumb and middle fingers together. Concentrate on exhaling pain, negative thoughts and feelings. Inhale healing light into the joints. Imagine yourself flexible, easily and freely moving your legs and arms, feet and hands, head and neck.

EIGHT WEEK COURSE:

1. Arthritis and Yoga
2. Breath and Relaxation
3. Warming up, posture and alignment
4. Postures (asanas)
5. Arthritis and its emotional effects
6. Restorative Posturing
7. Playtime isn't over

Integration