

[IMAGE]

Too Much Knee Pain

If you're over the age of 30, you're probably starting to realize that your body won't always work the way it did in days past. You used to run and jump on the basketball court for hours - no need to stretch, no need to worry. Now, every so often, you feel something "pop" or "crack" and wonder what happened to those carefree days gone by.

As we get older, our bone and muscle structure changes, putting us at increased risk for a variety of injuries. One of the most common complaints, particularly in the elderly population, is knee pain, a point emphasized in a recent study published by the *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society*.

As part of the Third National Health and Nutrition and Examination Survey (NHANES III), 6,596 elderly U.S. adults (60 years of age and older) were asked to report on whether they had experienced knee pain on "most days" in the six weeks preceding their exam. The same subjects were also asked to report on their ability to perform several activities involving use of the knee joint.

Overall, 18.1% of the men and 23.5% of the women reported knee pain; the highest reports were among African-American women and the eldest subjects. Levels of difficulty performing activities also increased with reported intensity of knee pain.

Osteoarthritis is the most common chronic articular disease among U.S. adults, with the knee being one of the most commonly affected joints. Knee pain, especially in the elderly population, represents a significant problem because it can limit mobility and independence and lead to deconditioning. Your doctor can tell you more about knee pain and about how exercise and dietary considerations can help prevent osteoarthritis and other conditions affiliated with age.

Reference:

Andersen RE, Crespo CJ, Ling SM, et al. Prevalence of significant knee pain among older Americans: results from the Third National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey. *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society* 1999: Vol. 47, pp1435-38.

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