

Cycling for people with osteoarthritis

What's the issue?

Osteoarthritis (OA) is a very common disorder in elderly people. It is caused by degeneration of the joint cartilage and mainly affects the knees, hips, and the joints of the hands and spinal column. The primary complaints are joint pain and (morning) stiffness. These ailments are often worse on rainy, damp days.

What are the challenges when cycling?

OA in the hips and/or knees will often make it harder to mount your bike. It can give pain when riding against the wind or in a too high gear.

OA in the neck will make it harder to turn your head when making turns. If there is nerve irritation involved, it can also cause a tingling sensation in your hands.

OA in the lower back will cause low back pain, especially when riding on bumpy roads or against the wind. If there is sciatica (irritation of the sciatic nerve) involved, you could start to feel a tingling sensation in your legs.

OA in the wrists and fingers will give local pain when holding your handlebar. In the case of carpal tunnel syndrome, the hands will start to tingle after some time.

What can you do about it?

Choose a bike with a dropped top tube. This will make it easier to mount. You could as well opt for an e-bike in order to make pedalling easier and cover longer distances. Make sure your bike fits you well. Your back should be straight and your knees not too much bent when riding.

Do some mobility and stretch exercises for your neck, lower back and hands before you start your ride and during breaks. (You 'll find a home exercise programme on my website [https://www.bikingbodyplanet.com/](https://www.bikingbodyplanet/))



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Avoid steep and bumpy roads, and pedal in a low gear, especially when you have the wind on top. Always cycle at your own pace. Listen to your body and stop if you're feeling pain.

If possible, choose a sunny, dry day to go for a ride. It's a good habit to check the weather forecast in advance.

What are the benefits of cycling for people with OA?

Since cycling is a low-impact, non-weight-bearing exercise, it is very beneficial for the joints of the legs. The constant pedalling movement lubricates the joint cartilage and prevents further degeneration.

Cycling will improve your general condition and strengthen your muscles, which has a positive impact on your joints as well.

With a little preparation and correct choice of your itinerary, cycling is pure fun. It will improve your wellbeing and as such alleviate any physical ailments.

Sources

Franklin, J. Cyclecraft. TSO, 2014.

Daniel, R. Cycling for seniors. Amazon, s.d.

<https://easyebiking.com/can-i-ride-an-e-bike-with-knee-problems-or-arthritis/>

Any enquiries or need for personal coaching?

Contact me: werner@bikingbodyplanet.com



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