

# 5 Common Causes Of Joint Pain And When To Seek Treatment

Joint pain can affect nearly every part of daily life. Whether it starts as mild stiffness in the morning or develops into persistent discomfort throughout the day, joint pain can make routine movements more difficult than they should be. Walking, lifting, exercising, and even simple household activities may suddenly become uncomfortable.

At Summit Orthopaedics in Idaho Falls, we help patients identify the source of their pain and develop personalized treatment plans designed to restore mobility and improve quality of life. Joint pain can develop for many different reasons, ranging from minor injuries to chronic inflammatory conditions.

Understanding some of the most common causes of joint pain may help you recognize when it is time to seek professional orthopaedic care.

## Why Joint Pain Happens

The body relies on healthy joints, muscles, ligaments, cartilage, and tendons to move properly. When any of these structures become injured, inflamed, or worn down over time, pain and stiffness can develop.

Joint discomfort may appear suddenly after an injury, or it may gradually worsen over several years. Some patients experience occasional soreness, while others deal with chronic pain that limits movement and daily activity.

Common symptoms associated with joint problems may include:

- Stiffness
- Swelling
- Tenderness
- Reduced range of motion
- Weakness
- Inflammation
- Pain during activity or rest

Because many different conditions can affect the joints, obtaining an accurate diagnosis is often the first step toward effective treatment.

### 1. Strains And Sprains

One of the most common causes of joint pain involves strains and sprains. These injuries frequently occur during exercise, sports, lifting, or sudden awkward movements that place excessive stress on muscles, ligaments, or tendons.

A strain typically affects muscles or tendons, while a sprain involves stretched or torn ligaments surrounding a joint. Both injuries can lead to pain, swelling, bruising, and temporary instability.

Commonly affected areas include:

- Ankles
- Knees
- Wrists
- Shoulders
- Lower back

While mild strains and sprains may improve with rest and supportive care, more severe injuries sometimes require professional evaluation or rehabilitation to prevent long-term instability.

Proper warm-ups, stretching, and conditioning exercises can often help reduce injury risk during physical activity.

## 2. Osteoarthritis

Osteoarthritis is one of the most common causes of chronic joint pain, particularly among older adults. This condition develops gradually as cartilage within the joints wears down over time.

Cartilage normally acts as a protective cushion between bones. As it deteriorates, bones may begin rubbing together, causing stiffness, swelling, and discomfort during movement.

Osteoarthritis most commonly affects:

- Knees
- Hips
- Hands
- Spine
- Shoulders

Many patients notice symptoms becoming worse after long periods of activity or inactivity. Joint stiffness in the morning is also a common complaint.

Although osteoarthritis cannot be completely reversed, treatment options may help reduce pain, improve mobility, and slow progression of the condition. At Summit Orthopaedics, we offer personalized care plans that may include physical therapy, lifestyle modifications, injections, or advanced orthopaedic treatments depending on symptom severity.

## 3. Rheumatoid Arthritis

Unlike osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis is an autoimmune condition. This means the immune system mistakenly attacks healthy joint tissue, leading to inflammation and joint damage over time.

Rheumatoid arthritis often affects joints symmetrically, meaning symptoms may occur on both sides of the body simultaneously. Patients frequently experience:

- Joint swelling
- Warmth around joints
- Fatigue
- Stiffness
- Reduced mobility

Over time, untreated inflammation may damage joints permanently and potentially affect other areas of the body as well.

Early diagnosis is especially important for rheumatoid arthritis because timely treatment may help slow disease progression and preserve joint function.

Patients experiencing persistent joint swelling or unexplained stiffness should seek medical evaluation promptly.

## 4. Bursitis

Throughout the body, small fluid-filled sacs called bursae help reduce friction between muscles, tendons, skin, and bones. Bursitis occurs when one of these sacs becomes inflamed.

This inflammation often develops due to repetitive movement, overuse, prolonged pressure, or injury. Patients with bursitis may notice pain that worsens with movement or pressure on the affected joint.

Bursitis commonly affects larger joints such as:

- Shoulders
- Hips
- Knees
- Elbows

Many people experience bursitis after repetitive work activities, sports participation, or extended periods of kneeling or lifting.

Treatment typically focuses on reducing inflammation, improving movement patterns, and allowing the irritated tissues time to heal properly.

## 5. Gout

Gout is one of the more painful forms of inflammatory joint conditions. It develops when uric acid crystals accumulate within a joint, triggering sudden episodes of severe pain and swelling.

Gout attacks often appear unexpectedly and may become extremely painful within a short period of time. Common symptoms include:

- Intense joint pain
- Swelling
- Redness
- Warmth
- Tenderness

The condition frequently affects the big toe but can also involve the ankles, knees, wrists, and other joints.

Certain dietary factors, dehydration, medications, and underlying health conditions may contribute to gout flare-ups. Treatment often includes medications, dietary guidance, and long-term management strategies designed to reduce future attacks.

Because symptoms can resemble other joint conditions, accurate diagnosis is important for proper treatment.

## Other Possible Causes Of Joint Pain

While these are some of the most common joint conditions, many other orthopaedic and inflammatory issues may also contribute to discomfort and mobility problems.

Additional causes may include:

- Tendon injuries
- Cartilage tears
- Sports injuries
- Joint infections
- Overuse conditions
- Autoimmune disorders
- Spine-related conditions

With more than 100 forms of arthritis alone, identifying the exact cause of joint pain can sometimes be more complex than patients realize.

That is why professional evaluation is often essential when symptoms persist or worsen.

## When Should You See An Orthopaedic Specialist?

Occasional soreness after physical activity is common, but ongoing pain should not be ignored. Persistent joint discomfort may indicate an underlying condition that requires treatment before further damage occurs.

Patients should consider seeking orthopaedic care if they experience:

- Joint pain lasting several weeks
- Swelling or redness
- Limited mobility
- Joint instability
- Difficulty walking or standing
- Pain that interferes with sleep or daily activities

Early intervention may improve treatment outcomes and help patients avoid worsening symptoms over time.

At Summit Orthopaedics, our team uses advanced diagnostic tools and personalized treatment plans to help patients regain mobility and return to the activities they enjoy most.

## Find Relief From Joint Pain In Idaho Falls

Living with joint pain can make everyday life more difficult, but effective treatment options are available. Whether your discomfort is caused by arthritis, injury, inflammation, or chronic wear and tear, identifying the source of pain is the first step toward lasting relief.

At Summit Orthopaedics in Idaho Falls, we provide expert care for joint conditions, sports injuries, musculoskeletal disorders, and mobility concerns. Our goal is to help patients reduce pain, improve movement, and maintain active lifestyles through personalized orthopaedic care.

If joint pain is affecting your quality of life, contact Summit Orthopaedics today to schedule an evaluation and explore treatment options tailored to your needs.

## Related Questions

What is the most common cause of joint pain?

One of the most common causes is osteoarthritis, which develops as cartilage gradually wears down over time.

How do I know if my joint pain is serious?

Persistent pain, swelling, limited movement, or joint instability may indicate a condition that requires medical evaluation.

Can exercise help reduce joint pain?

Yes. Low-impact exercise and strengthening routines often help improve mobility and support joint health when done properly.

What is the difference between arthritis and bursitis?

Arthritis affects the joints themselves, while bursitis involves inflammation of the fluid-filled sacs that cushion joints.