

Glossary of Orthopedic Conditions and Treatments

This glossary is no substitute for medical information and advice from your healthcare provider. This is not a comprehensive compilation of orthopedic conditions and treatments, nor do the entries thoroughly define conditions, their signs and symptoms, or treatment options. Many orthopedic issues are also rheumatic or neurological in nature, so please see the [Glossary of Rheumatic Disorders and Treatments](#) and the [Glossary of Neurological Disorders and Neurosurgical Procedures](#) for additional definitions.

Also see the [Glossary of Sports-related Injuries and Treatments](#).

For fuller listings and more information, see United Regional's [Health Library](#).

Achilles tendinitis — inflammation of the Achilles tendon often caused by increased activity, improper footwear or tight hamstrings.

Acromegaly — overgrowth of the bones of the hands, feet and face.

Adhesive capsulitis — also called frozen shoulder, it results from any inflammatory process about the shoulder in which capsular scar tissue is produced, resulting in pain and limited range of motion.

Anterior compartment syndrome — increased soft tissue pressure in the anterior compartment of the lower leg, resulting in pain, decreased sensation and muscle paralysis.

Anterior cruciate ligament tears — acute knee injury that commonly occurs in sports that require twisting, jumping and pivoting.

Ankylosing spondylitis — inflammatory disorder that affects the low back and pelvis and produces stiffness and pain.

Ankylosis — severe stiffness of a joint typically observed with end-stage arthritis.

Arthritis — joint inflammation resulting in pain, swelling, stiffness and limited movement.

Arthrodesis — surgical fusion of a joint to stop motion for pain relief or stabilization of an undependable joint.

Arthrography — procedure in which a contrast medium (“dye”) is injected into a joint to outline soft tissues for improved visibility on a standard MRI.

Arthrogryposis — describes a number of rare, non-progressive conditions characterized by stiff joints and abnormal muscle development.

Arthroplasty — procedure to replace or mobilize a joint, typically performed by removing the arthritic surfaces and replacing them with an implant. Total joint arthroplasty is replacement of both sides of the joint. Hemiarthroplasty replaces only one side of a joint

Arthroscopy — minimally invasive surgery in which a fiberoptic camera (arthroscope) is introduced into an area of the body through a small incision.

Arthrotomy — surgical procedure to open and explore a joint.

Avascular necrosis (AVN) — disease caused by the temporary or permanent loss of blood supply to bones, after which the bone lacking blood can collapse and die.

Avulsion fracture — fracture that occurs when a ligament or tendon pulls off a sliver of the bone.

Bone densitometry — bone density measurement technology.

Bursitis — inflammation of a bursa, a sac located where there is friction between tendon and bone or skin and bone, commonly caused by repetitive movement or excessive pressure.

Capsulorrhaphy — surgical procedure to tighten loose tissue around the shoulder joint.

Carpal tunnel syndrome — nerve compression at the wrist that is characterized by pain, numbness and weakness in the median nerve distribution of the hand.

Chronic subacromial impingement syndrome — shoulder pain associated with motion that commonly affects senior athletes.

Compound fracture — see Fracture.

Computed tomography (CT, CAT) scan — procedure that uses X-ray equipment and powerful computers to create detailed, cross-sectional images of the body.

Cubital tunnel syndrome — occurs when the ulnar nerve passing through the cubital tunnel on the inside of the elbow becomes compressed due to chronic irritation, injury or pressure.

DeQuervain's tenosynovitis — tendon sheath swelling in the tendons of the thumb.

Diastasis — separation of normally joined parts, such as adjacent bones without fracture.

Discography — procedure used in conjunction with a CT scan in which a radiopaque material is injected into discs (the cushioning pads that separate the bones of the spine) to determine if they are the source of back pain.

Discectomy — surgical decompression procedure in which an intervertebral disc is removed.

Dislocation — occurs when extreme force is put on a joint, causing the ends of two connected bones to separate.

Dual-energy X-ray absorptiometry (DXA or DEXA) — diagnostic imaging technology that uses two different X-ray voltages to measure bone density.

Dystonia — impaired or disordered muscle tone.

Effusion — presence of fluid within a joint.

Electromyography (EMG) — test that measures the electrical response of muscle contraction to learn more about nerve function.

Enchondroma — benign (noncancerous) cartilage tumors commonly seen in arms and legs.

Femoral neck fracture — hip fracture that occurs one to two inches from the hip joint, sometimes leading to complications as the break usually cuts off blood supply to the head of the femur which forms the hip joint. See Fracture.

Fluoroscopy — imaging technique that uses X-rays to obtain real-time moving images of the internal structures, such as wrist motion.

Fracture — partial or complete break in the bone, classified as open (also called a compound fracture, meaning the bone breaks through the skin or can be seen via a deep wound) or as closed (also called a simple fracture in which the skin remains intact).

Ganglion cysts — fluid-filled cysts that develop on the front or back of the hand for no apparent reason.

Hemiarthroplasty — see Arthroplasty.

Herniated disc — rupturing of the tissue that separates the vertebral bones of the spinal column.

Hill-Sachs lesion — bony defect in the humeral head caused by a shoulder dislocation.

Hip impingement — condition in which the ball and socket of the hip joint fit together too tightly, hindering normal motion and causing cartilage damage.

Intertrochanteric hip fracture — generally, an easier-to-repair hip fracture that occurs three to four inches from the hip joint, with no interruption of blood supply to the head of the femur which forms the hip joint.

Intradiscal therapy— introduction of a steroid or other medication into the disc space to relieve pain caused by a degenerated disc, or introduction of a catheter that allows heating of the disc to ablate (remove) nerves that may be responsible for pain.

Lachman test — used to diagnose a tear to the anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) of the knee (ACL tear).

Laminectomy — surgical decompression procedure that removes a portion of the vertebral bone called the lamina.

Laminotomy — surgical decompression procedure to increase the size of an opening in a lamina (part of the vertebral bone).

Lateral epicondylitis — commonly called tennis elbow, it is an injury to the tendon that is attached to the outer part of the elbow, due to repetitive twisting of the wrist or forearm.

Lateral patellar compression syndrome (LPCS) — characterized by pain in the knee due to increased pressure from the kneecap (patella).

Kyphosis — curvature of the spine giving an abnormally rounded or “humpback” appearance.

Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) —produces detailed images of organs and structures within the body and is best for looking at soft tissues such as ligaments, tendons, muscle and cartilage.

Medial epicondylitis — commonly called golfer’s or baseball elbow, it is characterized by pain from the elbow to the wrist on the palm side of the forearm caused by damage to the tendons that bend the wrist toward the palm.

Myelopathy — abnormal condition of the spinal cord, whether through disease or compression, that can result in spasticity, impairment of sensation, and impairment of bowel and bladder function.

Myofascial pain syndrome — painful musculoskeletal response following muscle trauma.

Neuromuscular scoliosis — form of scoliosis caused by a neurological disorder of the central nervous system or muscle.

Osteoarthritis — common type of arthritis caused by the inflammation, breakdown and eventual loss of articular cartilage in the joints.

Osteochondroma — benign tumor that contains both bone and cartilage and usually occurs near the end of a long bone.

Osteolysis — destruction of bone caused by disease, infection or loss of blood supply.

Osteonecrosis — the death of bone, often as a result of obstruction of its blood supply.

Osteopenia — less bone mineral density than normal, a precursor to osteoporosis.

Osteophyte — outgrowth of bone that forms around joints, deforming the joints and limiting their movements, commonly found in joints with osteoarthritis.

Osteoporosis — loss of bone density resulting in an increased risk of fracture.

Osteotomy — surgical procedure in which bones are cut and realigned, with the goal of improving upper extremity function

Paget's disease — chronic bone disorder that typically results in enlarged, deformed bones due to excessive breakdown and formation of bone tissue, which may result in bone pain, arthritis, deformities or fractures.

Patellar tendinitis — a condition that results in pain and inflammation of the patella tendon, a common problem in jumping sports.

Patellectomy — surgical excision of the patella (kneecap).

Periacetabular osteotomy (PAO) — hip surgery in which bones are cut and repositioned to better align the femoral head within the hip bone.

Peritendinitis — inflammation of the tendon sheath.

Perthes disease — condition in which the femoral head dies because of a temporary loss of blood supply.

Prosthesis — artificial body part replacement.

Quantitative computed tomography (QCT) — procedure used to measure bone mineral density (BMD) for osteoporosis that is similar to a normal CT scan but uses computer software for three-dimensional imaging and volume density measurements. QCT uses a higher dose of radiation than the standard test for osteoporosis, the dual-energy X-ray absorptiometry test, and may be more expensive. See Computed tomography, Dual-energy X-ray absorptiometry.

Radionuclide bone scan — a nuclear imaging technique that shows blood flow to the bone and cell activity within the bone by injecting a very small amount of radioactive material into the bloodstream to be detected by a scanner.

Radioulnar synostosis — abnormal bony or soft tissue connection between the radius and ulna, the two bones of the forearm.

Resection — removal of part of all of a bone.

Resection arthroplasty — procedure in which the surfaces of diseased bone are excised, allowing fibrocartilage to grow in its place.

Revascularization — procedure to provide an additional blood supply to fractured bone.

RICE — a method of treatment of acute injury that is used to counteract the body's initial response to injury, RICE is an acronym for rest, ice, compression and elevation.

Rotator cuff impingement syndrome — the rotator cuff tendon gets trapped in the subacromial space (beneath the shoulder blade) and repeatedly scrapes against the shoulder blade, eventually leading to fraying of the tendon.

Rotator cuff tear — tear in the rotator cuff tendon that, in younger people, normally results from trauma (injury); in older people, tears are often caused by rotator cuff impingement syndrome.

Rotator cuff tendonitis — inflammation of the tendons of the rotator cuff muscles generally caused by overuse of the shoulder.

Sarcopenia — loss of muscle mass and strength as a result of aging.

Sciatica — also known as lumbar radiculopathy, it is pain that originates along the sciatic nerve extending from the back of the pelvis down the back of the thigh. Sciatica is sometimes caused by a herniated disc in the spine that presses on the sciatic nerve.

Sclerosis — hardening of tissue, which often occurs in advanced stages of arthritis.

Scoliosis — sideways curvature of the spine beyond what is considered “normal” (greater than 15 degrees).

Spinal fusion — surgical procedure in which two or more of the vertebrae in the spine are united together so that motion no longer occurs between them.

Spinal stenosis — narrowing of the canal housing the spinal cord.

Reflex sympathetic dystrophy (RSD) — condition characterized by diffuse pain, swelling and limitation of movement that follows an injury such as a fracture in an arm or a leg. Its symptoms are out of proportion to the injury and may linger long after the injury has healed.

SLAP tear — a specific kind of shoulder injury involving the firm ring of tissue called the labrum around the shoulder socket. SLAP stands for “superior labrum, anterior to posterior,” meaning the top part of the labrum, from the front to the back.

Spondylitis — inflammatory disease of the spine.

Spondylolisthesis — forward slippage of one vertebra over another.

Sprain — partial or complete tear of a ligament.

Strain — partial or complete tear of a muscle or tendon.

Stress fracture — tiny overuse fractures, usually to a bone in the foot or the shin bone (tibia).

Syndactyly — webbed or conjoined fingers.

Tendinosis — degeneration of the tendon’s collagen in response to chronic overuse.

Tendonitis — inflammation of the tendons which may result from overuse of a tendon during certain activities or sports.

Tenosynovitis — inflammation of the thin inner lining of a tendon sheath.

Tennis elbow — also called lateral epicondylitis, it is an injury to the tendon that is attached to the outer part of the elbow, due to repetitive twisting of the wrist or forearm.

Trigger thumb — thumb that clicks, catches or locks as the tip of the thumb moves from a flexed (bent) to an extended (straight) position.

Turf toe — hyperextension injury of the toe joint associated with athletic activity on hard surfaces.

Viscosupplementation — injection of viscous fluid to treat a painful, arthritic joint.