



Your painful joints are in Good Hands

Wouldn't it be nice if by adjusting our daily choices, we could simply avoid painful medical problems? Of course that's true for some health concerns, but arthritis of the hands and upper extremities isn't one of them. It's a painful disease that is most commonly caused by age, genetics and injury – things we can't dodge.

Meet the doctors:



Nicholas Meyer, MD
St. Croix Orthopaedics



Steven Meletiou, MD
St. Croix Orthopaedics

However, we can still combat arthritis and minimize its role in our lives. Highly qualified specialists are available every day at St. Croix Orthopaedics, conveniently located in Hudson Hospital's new medical office building. "A lot of people have developed these conditions through no fault of their own," said orthopaedic surgeon Nicholas Meyer. "I want to help them get better or at least have less pain."

Meyer and his colleague, Steven Meletiou, MD, are fellowship-trained in techniques specific to hand, wrist, elbow and shoulder. Both men understand body mechanics on a professional as well as personal level. Meyer is an active community hockey player. Meletiou has competed in several triathlons.

Their sub-specialty is particularly complex because it covers many delicate and intricate bones, tendons, ligaments, hinge joints, muscles and nerves. Working together, these parts allow you to do hundreds of tasks – pick up a coffee cup, jot a note, brush your teeth – without much thought. But with arthritis, you're constantly reminded of the limitations imposed by pain and immobility.

"It's very fascinating from a biomechanical and biological standpoint," said Meletiou. "There are always new developments that allow us to help people. You never stop learning and never stop being a student. I like that variety." According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, some form of arthritis affects 33% of Americans. If you aren't afflicted, it's still interesting to understand more, if for no other reason than to truly appreciate holding this magazine without pain.

A LOOK AT THE BASIC TYPES OF ARTHRITIS:

Osteoarthritis

- Degenerative joint disease
- Cartilage lining the ends of bones at the joint has worn away, leaving bone to rub against bone
- Often called the "wear and tear" arthritis

However, Meletiou said that "wear and tear" isn't the most accurate description for this type of arthritis. That's because it can occur in the joints of your hands and upper extremities, which aren't weight-bearing, and it also seems to run in some families and not in others, regardless of individual activity level.

Rheumatoid arthritis

- Inflammatory arthritis
- Body's immune system has become confused, has started attacking itself
- Joints can become red and swollen
- Can hit at a younger age
- Is more common in women

Aside from avoiding injury, there is little to be done to prevent arthritis. "They've tried injections and medications. Nothing's really been proven to reduce cartilage loss," said Meyer. The good news is that procedures for surgical relief and repair are advancing each year. For example, for thumb arthritis, surgeons can remove the arthritic part of the bone and suspend the thumb from a tendon, relieving pain and giving the patient range of mobility. Meletiou does this procedure about once a week and is still amazed by it.

Less common, but just as innovative, are finger joint replacements. Those bigger finger knuckles used for knocking on doors can be replaced, and new technology for the prosthetics continues to improve. Your wrist joint can be replaced too, and that prosthetic offers more motion, durability and stability than before, said Meletiou. For the shoulder joint, surgeons can now customize the prosthetic for each individual patient, leading to a far greater range of motion.

Feel hopeless about your arthritis? Have a discussion with an orthopaedic surgeon. Many non-surgical solutions, including hand therapy at Hudson Hospital, can also offer relief for many patients. The occupational therapists can manufacture splints and customize braces, as well as help patients find more comfortable ways of doing day-to-day activities.

Whether therapy, surgery or a combination of both are best options for patients, Meyer and Meletiou are confident about the facilities and professionals at Hudson Hospital. "It's a nice environment to see patients," said Meletiou. "I like the broad range of services in a small community. Patients can have their wrist replacement surgery at the hospital, then continue services there for therapy and follow up."



St. Croix Orthopaedics

Partnering to provide the best care for you – conveniently located at Hudson Hospital Specialty Clinics.

COMPREHENSIVE ORTHOPAEDIC CARE
For generations, St. Croix Orthopaedics (SCO) and Hudson Hospital & Clinic have partnered to provide comprehensive, innovative orthopaedic and sports medicine care to the community.

Services include:

- Surgical and non-surgical treatments
- Diagnostics
- Preventive and treatment therapies

SCO's onsite presence and partnership with Hudson Hospital & Clinic makes it as easy as possible for patients to access the services they need.

NEW SPACE, EXPANDED SERVICES
SCO opens in June in its new location on the first floor of the new medical office building. The 4,000 square foot space is an upgrade from SCO's current 1,200. Ancillary services include X-ray, orthotics and retail space.

The clinic will house:

- Six patient rooms
- One cast and procedure room
- One orthotics patient room

SCO PROVIDERS AT HUDSON INCLUDE:

- Robert Knowlan, MD
- Steven Meletiou, MD
- Nicholas Meyer, MD
- William Schneider, MD
- Melanie Berg, DPM

For appointments call (800) 423-1088. Visit hudsonhospital.org and stcroixortho.com to learn more.