

July, 2021

Paragon Orthopedic Center  
Grants Pass, Oregon



## What's That Clicking?

### Is noise in a joint a sign of something wrong?

You might hear it all the time, or only with certain motions in your joints, that popping, grinding, clicking, creaking, and sometimes painful noise that happen as you move. The medical term for this is crepitus and it can occur at any age, but most often in the older years. Is the noise something to panic about? Not necessarily. Most of the time it is not indicative of joint damage and does not guarantee you will have arthritis, but read on to find out when you might need to pay attention to it.

#### What's going on in there?

Crepitus is usually related to the tendons, cartilage, and ligaments supporting that joint. Possible reasons for it are:

- Harmless nitrogen air bubbles inside the joint that pop.
- In the neck, muscle tightness that cause the joints to grind.
- A tendon or ligament moving over a bump at the joint, causing a snapping sound.
- A ligament that tightens with movement.
- Surgery or injury sometimes causes popping sounds because of reduced flexibility and range of motion. They should decrease with stretching, such as with physical therapy (PT), foam rolling, or deep tissue massage. Many times the sounds are related to surgical scar tissue or adhesion and these may decrease with PT or time.
- Tearing a ligament can feel like a pop, but this also is associated with pain and swelling -- signs you need to be seen.
- Areas in the joint where the cartilage has worn away and left rough areas that have taken away smooth movement. This is called osteoarthritis or degenerative joint disease.

Osteoarthritis is not a guarantee of pain, but studies show that a many of those who hear noises in their knees do develop osteoarthritis later. According to Johns Hopkins Sports Medicine, no one knows the exact causes of all the pops and clicks. While that might not be comforting, it is important to note that if the noises accompany swelling and pain, you should consider consulting a medical professional.

#### Myth buster

Cracking your knuckles does not cause arthritis. Your mother might have threatened you with this curse, but it simply isn't a fact. The nitrogen bubbles within the joint will reform in about 20 minutes for the cracking sound to be made again. Those who say popping their joints makes them feel better are having a psychological experience, not a true change in anything physical. ***Popping the shoulder out of the socket can be more serious and can cause damage.***

#### When Should I Make An Appointment?

- A joint injury
- Pain at the joint
- Swelling at the joint
- Limited range of motion
- The joint is "locked up"
- Bruising around the joint

Paragon Orthopedics Center is happy to take your call if you have concerns about the noises your joints make. Both Dr. Bents and Dr. Van Horne see and treat a variety of joint issues. Our staff is ready to make you an appointment, if necessary. Call us Monday through Friday from 8am-5pm: (541)472-0603.

The following articles were referenced for this newsletter:

<https://health.clevelandclinic.org/why-do-my-joints-make-noise-clicking-and-popping/>

<https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/orthopaedic-surgery/specialty-areas/sports-medicine/conditions-we-treat/joint-popping-cracking.html>

<https://www.cedars-sinai.org/blog/ask-a-doc-is-knuckle-cracking-bad.html>

<https://www.verywellhealth.com/what-causes-popping-joints-2552212>

