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## What 4 things do living things need to survive

Photo Courtesy: Jordan Siemens/Getty Images The desert is an ecosystem that's far more diverse than most people realize. Although cartoons make people think of tumbleweeds, cacti and roadrunners, deserts are full of plenty of living and non-living things that make this biome beautiful. The way that many plants and animals survive in the harsh elements of a desert is nothing short of amazing. Still, there is a long list of non-living things in the desert that make this ecosystem unique and absolutely breathtaking.**Non-Living Factors: Facts About Abiotic Factors**Things that are non-living are abiotic, meaning they exist physically but aren't biologically living. Things that are living are biotic. Abiotic factors in any ecosystem play a vital role in how the entire ecosystem functions. Is wind a living thing? Is sand a living thing? The answer to both questions is "no," but these non-living things in the desert have a huge impact on the way living things grow and thrive in this particular environment. Photo Courtesy: Eyewolf/Getty Images Abiotic factors encompass much of what makes each ecosystem unique. The sand that gives the desert a distinct look is an abiotic factor. The extreme heat that makes the desert perfect for cold-blooded animals like rattlesnakes is also a non-living thing. One abiotic factor that separates the desert from most other ecosystems is its relative lack of rainfall. Many of the animals in the desert have evolved bodily functions that help them make the best out of a small amount of water. If those same biotic factors were present in a wetter ecosystem, such as a rainforest, those living things that have adapted to the desert might not be able to handle the amount of water. For example, chinchillas, which are native to a region close to the Atacama desert, evolved thick coats of fur that they keep clean using dust from the dry environment. Their coats are so thick that, if the animals get wet, the dense fur absorbs water and can cause fungal infections.**What Is a Desert Ecosystem?**A desert ecosystem consists of biotic (living) and abiotic (non-living) factors that support each other. Deserts are some of the driest climates on Earth. In addition to the arid deserts that most people are used to, there are also cold, coastal and semi-arid deserts. Photo Courtesy: Morgan Sides/Getty Images Most deserts get fewer than 2 feet of rainfall in an entire year. The driest deserts only have about 10 inches of annual rainfall. That's nearly a foot less than the average annual rainfall in most of the United States. In coastal deserts, more moisture comes from fog than rain.**List of Non-Living Things in the Desert****Sand** is the most common abiotic factor in a desert. Deserts can have as much sand as oceans have water. Although this unique type of soil doesn't provide the best home for most plants, it has a huge impact on the way animals in the desert live. The sand bears the extreme temperatures of the desert. So, many walking animals in deserts have thick skin on the bottoms of their feet so they don't get burned traversing the hot sand. The rock hyrax is one example of a desert animal with thick paws. Photo Courtesy: traumlichtfabrik/Getty Images When the wind whips through the desert, sand can damage an animal's eyes. For protection against this, many desert animals, such as camels, evolved to have unusually long eyelashes. Sand also provides the perfect surface for some desert animals to move around on. Various snakes are able to slither easily through the loose sediment. Lizards, roadrunners and jackrabbits are also able to move quickly through the sand. Sunlight is not a living thing, but it also has a very big impact on the way plants and animals in the desert live. In most other ecosystems, sunlight produces heat during the day. Vegetation, humidity and other abiotic factors help to keep some of that heat in the atmosphere when the sun doesn't shine at night. Because there's little vegetation and even less water in the desert, this type of biome becomes very cold when the sun goes down at night. To survive in the desert, living things have to be equipped to handle both the heat of the day and the chilly temperatures at night. Many animals in the desert survive the heat because they're fossorial, meaning they burrow into the ground. When it gets too hot, they dig holes to find comfort in the cooler temperatures underground. The wind is a common abiotic factor in most types of deserts. The climate is too hot and dry to support a large amount of vegetation like other ecosystems can. The little vegetation found in the desert is usually very short with roots close to the ground to soak up as much groundwater as possible. Thus, whenever the wind blows through the desert, there are very few natural elements to slow the speed of the wind. Wind at high speeds creates the ferocious dust storms deserts are known for. Rocks in the desert are directly impacted by two other abiotic factors: wind and sand. The wind sweeps the sand across rocks at high speeds, causing erosion. Most of the rocks in the desert are either very smooth or contain sharp crags created by wind erosion. These unique types of rocks form homes for many desert animals, such as the rock hyrax, which hides from the elements in the shady nooks and crannies of desert rocks. For animals and plants, water is perhaps the most important non-living thing in the desert. Although deserts don't get much water from rain, there are underground reserves of water in most deserts, and some plants have specialized roots to be able to access that water. Much of the water in deserts also arrives in the form of dew and fog. The animals and plants that live in deserts have specialized bodies that allow them to live with less water. For example, camels have humps that store fat and water, allowing the mammals to go for long stretches of time without having a drink. These are just a few of the most important abiotic factors in a desert, and there's a long list of abiotic factors that shape the beautiful desert ecosystem. These non-living things have a large influence on the adaptations the plants and animals in the ecosystem have developed in order to survive. **MORE FROM REFERENCE.COM** Photo Courtesy: [Jose Luis Pelaez Inc/DigitalVision/Getty Images] **Osteoarthritis (OA)** is an age-related form of arthritis. OA is what's known as a degenerative joint disease, and it tends to occur most commonly in the hips, back, hands and feet. In the United States, over 32.5 million adults are living with OA, which has no known cure. However, certain activities can reduce your risk of developing OA, and there are steps you can take to relieve the associated discomfort once you've been diagnosed with this health condition. **What Is Osteoarthritis?** OA is a painful joint disease that occurs when the cartilage within a joint starts to break down. Cartilage normally serves as a shock-absorbing cushion between bones, and its breakdown results in bones rubbing directly against one another during movement. This friction causes the bone to thicken, which can cause spurs (bony growths) to develop between joints. Stiffness, pain and loss of movement may occur as the joint lining becomes inflamed after long-term cartilage breakdown and spur growth. Over time, the abrasions between bones that occur when they rub together may result in permanent joint damage. **Symptoms of Osteoarthritis** Symptoms of OA may vary from person to person. However, most people living with this condition tend to experience at least one of the following: joint sorenessjoint painjoint stiffness following periods of inactivity Morning stiffness that dissipates quickly Decreased range of motion Changes in posture, walking and bodily coordinationPain in weight-bearing areas of the body, such as the knees, hips, spine and extremities **What Causes Osteoarthritis?** As a person ages, it's normal for their cartilage to lose its elasticity. However, intensive stress such as vigorous exercise can make the cartilage break down faster and make a person more likely to develop OA. There are two types of OA: primary and secondary. Primary OA is known as the more common "wear-and-tear" OA and is usually associated with aging. Secondary OA may happen from a variety of modifiable risk factors, including prior injuries, weight and genetics. While the specific cause of OA is still unknown, there are several factors that can increase your risk of developing this condition: **Weight:** Individuals with obesity are at an increased risk of developing OA, as their joints may experience stress due to increased weight-bearing. **Age:** OA is known as the "wear-and-tear" form of arthritis and is associated with increasing age.**Anatomical sex at birth:** OA affects people assigned female at birth more than those assigned male at birth, particularly after the age of 50. **Genetic predisposition:** OA often runs in families. In addition, an individual with arthritis in one area of their body is at an increased risk of developing OA in another area, such as their knees or hands. **Past injury or joint overuse:** Prior sports or occupational injuries (such as physical labor, repetitive motion or frequent heavy lifting) can contribute to the development of secondary OA.**Having other illnesses and deficiencies:** People with other forms of arthritis have a greater chance of developing the condition. In addition, deficiencies in certain hormones and vitamins C, D and E may also play a role in the development of OA. **Diagnosis & Testing for Osteoarthritis** To diagnose OA, your doctor will first take a thorough medical and social history in order to build a complete picture of your condition. Included in this medical history will be a review of your past and present symptoms. Next, your physician will perform a physical exam to check your joints for swelling, abnormal growths and changes in range of motion. Following the physical exam, you will likely undergo imaging, such as an X-ray or magnetic resonance imaging (MRI). Depending on the results of your imaging, your physician can recommend a treatment protocol and activity adjustments. **Treating Osteoarthritis** There are no known cures for OA, but there are steps you can take to prevent or alleviate the symptoms you experience: **Weight control:** For individuals with obesity, weight control may be the best self-management technique to alleviate OA symptoms. Losing weight will help alleviate additional stress on the joints. **Physical activity:** Moderate exercise can strengthen the surrounding musculature of affected joint muscles and increase flexibility, thus reducing stiffness. However, it's important to consult a physician for a specific exercise plan because overly vigorous exercise may worsen your symptoms.**Medications:** Your physician may prescribe medication to help reduce joint inflammation and pain, ranging from topical creams to injections within the joint. **Physical therapy:** Physical therapy can target and strengthen certain muscles to increase flexibility, in turn helping joint mobility. **Occupational therapy** can also teach you how to manage your job responsibilities without further stressing or damaging your joints. These therapies may employ braces or splints to help you lead a more comfortable life with OA.**Surgery:** Surgery and joint replacement may be reasonable treatment options for more advanced cases of OA. During surgery, surgeons can remove or repair damaged tissues, cartilage and bone spurs. You should consult your physician for the most ideal treatment option. **Diet:** Antioxidant intake and vitamins C, D and E are helpful in counteracting inflammation. Eating a balanced and healthy diet can also help improve your body's natural anti-inflammatory abilities. **Resource Links:** **MORE FROM SYMPTOMFIND.COM**





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