

Self Help for Knee Osteoarthritis (OA)

Information for patients

What is OA knee?

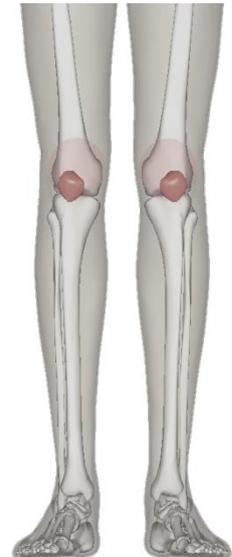
Osteoarthritis is a condition that affects your joints and is common in the knee. When a knee joint develops OA, some of the cartilage covering the ends of the bones gradually roughens and becomes thin. Associated features include stiffening and weakening of the surrounding muscles, ligaments and tendons.

Risk Factors

- Being overweight
- Previous significant injury or surgery to the knee
- Genetic predisposition
- Age over 45 years
- Very hard repetitive exercise or physically demanding jobs

Symptoms

Pain, stiffness, reduced function at the knee joint, swelling, weakness of surrounding muscles, creaking or grating of the knee.



Prognosis/Outlook

It is impossible to predict how OA will develop for any one person. The severity of the condition does not determine the severity of the symptoms. In many cases the changes inside the joint do not cause much pain, or if there is pain, it can be mild and may come and go. Some of the changes, including stiffness and weakness, can be improved significantly by exercise. In some cases however, OA may progress to an extent that surgical replacement of the knee (Total Knee Replacement) may be recommended.

Management

- Losing weight
- Exercises to strengthen and stretch the knee joint
- Pain relief in the form of heat, ice, a Transcutaneous Electrical Nerve Stimulation (TENS), anti-inflammatory gels, painkillers. Please seek advice from a pharmacist or GP as necessary for medication
- Aerobic exercise, such as walking, swimming, or cycling
- Wearing supportive footwear to cushion the impact on the knee joints
- Establishing a balance between exercise and rest for example pacing your activity levels
- Use of walking aids, such as a walking stick
- Use of an 'over the counter' knee support may sometimes help
- Using floor pedals or a static bike are beneficial for knee range of movement

Exercises

Diagram	Explanation
	<p>To stretch your calf keep your feet pointing forwards, and keep the calf you want to stretch straight behind you. Bend the front knee and keep your heels down.</p> <p>Hold the stretch for 30 seconds.</p> <p>Repeat two to three times, three times each day.</p>
	<p>Lying on your back put a cushion/ball under the knee to be exercised.</p> <p>Exercise your leg by pulling your foot and toes up, tightening your thigh muscle and straightening the knee. Keep the knee on the cushion/ball.</p> <p>Hold approximately five seconds and slowly relax.</p> <p>Repeat 10 times, three times each day.</p>
	<p>Lying on your back, sitting with one leg straight and the other leg bent, exercise your straight leg by pulling the toes up, straightening the knee and lifting the leg 20 cm off the bed.</p> <p>You can vary the exercise by having your foot pointing either upwards, inwards or outwards.</p> <p>Hold approximately five seconds and slowly relax.</p> <p>Repeat 10 times, three times each day.</p>



To stretch your hamstring keep your affected leg straight and bend the knee on the unaffected side.

Lift your heel on the straight leg and sit your buttocks down towards your heel.

Hold the stretch for 20-30 seconds.

Repeat two to three times, three times each day.



To perform the mini squats use your bottom muscles and the muscles on the front and back of your thighs to push yourself up from a chair.

Slowly lower yourself back into sitting on the chair.

Repeat 10 times, three times each day.

Frequently Asked Questions

Is my mobility going to seriously deteriorate?

OA is a slow process which occurs over many years. In most cases mobility can be well maintained by following a regular exercise programme and the self help guide given above.

Is it normal for my knee to click and clunk?

Yes this is one of the symptoms of OA knee but can also occur in normal knees. Unless this is associated with severe pain, this is not a symptom to normally be concerned about.

Is it normal for my knee to give way?

This can occur as a symptom due to muscle weakness but can be improved with exercise

What do I do if my symptoms do not get better and I cannot manage?

If your symptoms persist and start to impact on the quality of your life after following advice in this leaflet, please complete a physiotherapy self-referral form from your local GP reception.

For further information on OA knee please refer to www.arthritisresearchuk.org or www.nhs.uk/conditions/osteoarthritis/treatment/

This information is available in audio, Braille, large print and other languages.
To request a copy, please ask a member of staff.

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