



## **Pain Relief Advice**

**Anti-inflammatory tablets or painkillers may have been prescribed or alternatively can be purchased from your local pharmacy.**

**These will help with stiffness and pain but may not be suitable for all patients. Paracetamol may be a suitable alternative.**

**If in doubt you should consult your GP or pharmacist before taking any medication.**

**Keep all medicines out of the reach of children.**

Call now for more information

01335 230079

[www.dchs.nhs.uk](http://www.dchs.nhs.uk)

## **Practical Help on the Management of Osteoarthritis of the Knee**

This leaflet is designed to supplement the advice given by your GP or Physiotherapist. It aims to help you if you have Osteoarthritis of the knee. It may also help your family understand more about the problem. The information is written by physiotherapists and based on the latest research.

## What is Osteoarthritis?

Osteoarthritis (OA) is the term used to describe the changes that occur to our joints over time. An important factor related to experiencing pain with OA is related to the speed at which the changes occur. A lot of people with worn joints never know about it because the changes occur slowly.

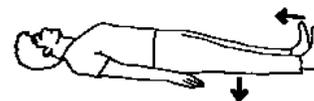
Joints love movement. Movement distributes the fluid in a joint. Having weight through a joint provides pumping compression which is essential for the health of the cartilage.

As the cartilage thins, the surrounding bone thickens in an attempt to redistribute weight. The joint may feel like it is grinding and a grating sound may sometimes be heard. These are common features and need no special attention.

The lining to the joint also thickens and produces fluid, which can cause the joint to swell. This may be helpful as it can create a bit of a cushion. However it may also make the joint feel stiff especially after a time of inactivity for example first thing in the morning.

These changes can be considered the kisses of time.

## Strengthening Exercises



Lying on your back or sitting with legs straight out in front.

Pull your toes up and push your knees down firmly against the bed.

Hold for 2 seconds, relax.

Repeat 10 times twice a day.



Stand leaning with your back against a wall. Place your feet about 20 cm from the wall shoulders width apart.

Slowly slide down the wall keeping the middle of your knee in line with your foot.

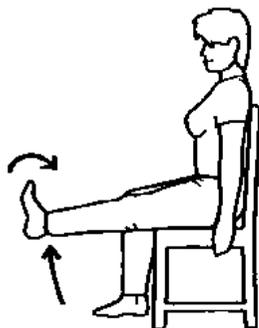
Squeeze your bottom to return to standing by sliding back up the wall.

Repeat 10 times.

This exercise will require some effort. Only bend as far as you feel able to do safely.

It may be helpful to do fewer repetitions to begin with, may be more frequent than twice a day. As you get stronger increase the number of repetitions

### Movement Exercises



Sitting on a chair.

Gently straighten your knee.

Repeat 10 times twice a day



Gently Bend your knee.

Repeat 10 times twice a day

### Movement and Balance Exercise



Stand. Hold on to a support and bring one leg slightly backwards.

Bend your knee and lift your foot off the floor.

Do not lean forward or bend from the hip whilst doing this exercise.

Do on each leg.  
Repeat 10 times twice a day

### How do I know I have Osteoarthritis ?

You might experience any of the following

- **Stiffness, cracking or grating** - usually worse in the morning or after longer periods of inactivity. Eases with movement.
- **Pain** - worse on prolonged standing, walking or running. However, severe pain does not indicate advanced osteoarthritis.
- **Swelling** - may be due to fluid or bony thickening and may vary according to time of day
- **Instability** - your knee feels like it might 'give way'. Usually due to muscle weakness

### What can I do to help myself ?

Most mild to moderate cases of osteoarthritis can be managed very well by yourself. Try these ideas:-

- **Exercise/Movement** — A gentle progressive increase in activity is often very beneficial. Walking is a good example of a general activity
- **Heat** - Good for relieving pain and stiffness. Apply with a hot water bottle or soak in a hot bath. Move the joint after or during the application of heat. Do not make the pack too hot to avoid burning the skin.
- **Ice** - A good method of pain relief, especially if the joint is hot and swollen. Use a pack of frozen peas or crushed ice cubes wrapped in a damp cloth. Leave for 10 - 15 minutes. This can be repeated every three to four hours if necessary. Do not apply ice directly to the skin to avoid ice burns.

- **Movement** - Take regular opportunities to move the knee.  
This will minimise stiffness and help nourish the joint.
- **Sticks** - Use of a stick can help reduce the strain on your knee joints. The stick should be measured for you personally and used on the opposite side to your affected knee.
- **Weight** - If you are overweight studies have shown that losing weight can help the condition. There are benefits to be gained by losing just small amounts of weight. Even 1 or 2 kg has been shown to be of benefit.
- **Footwear** - Cushioned shoes or insoles may be helpful to act as shock absorbers for the knee.
- **Medication** - Anti-inflammatory tablets or painkillers may have been prescribed or alternatively can be purchased from your local pharmacy. These will help with stiffness and pain but may not be suitable for all patients. Paracetamol may be a suitable alternative. If in doubt you should consult your GP or pharmacist before taking any medication.

## Exercise

Exercise has been found to be beneficial for people with Osteoarthritis of the knee. These exercises will not only help to relieve the symptoms of Osteoarthritis but also provide protection against worsening of the condition.

There are four aspects of exercise that need to be considered:

- Strength (of muscles, ligaments, tendons, nerves.)
- Flexibility (of the joints)
- Aerobic Capacity (e.g. swimming and walking).  
This type of exercise helps you to improve your overall fitness and become more active. It may also help you lose weight.
- Balance

**THE BENEFIT OF EXERCISE IS ACHIEVED WHEN DONE REGULARLY. A LITTLE AND OFTEN HAS A CUMULATIVE EFFECT.**

Exercise does not have to be expensive and a programme done at home may be more practical, more affordable and enjoyable than one done at the local sports centre.

The following exercises will help strengthen the important muscles that support your knee.

You may experience some discomfort with exercise, this is normal. The pain should ease soon afterwards. If pain worsens seek medical advice.