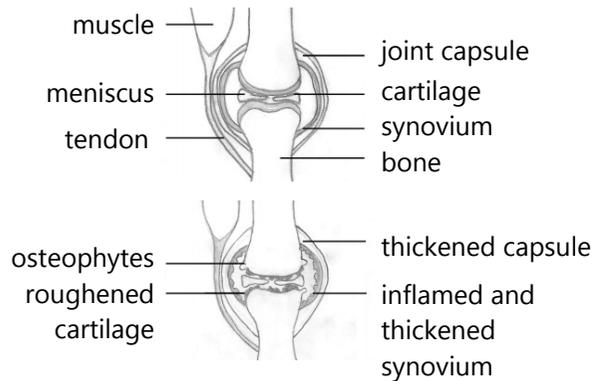


Knee osteoarthritis

Osteoarthritis of the knee occurs when the bony surfaces (cartilage) between the thigh bone and shin bone, and sometimes on the back of the kneecap (patella), become worn and uneven. This prevents smooth movement of the joint and can be a normal part of the ageing process.



Symptoms

Symptoms of osteoarthritis of the knee may include:

- pain and swelling
- stiffness and restricted movement
- grinding noise on movement
- the knee giving way when turning or walking on uneven ground
- pain first thing in the morning, after sitting too long or after doing too much

Sometimes there may be no obvious cause for your discomfort.

How can I help myself?

Weight control

Being overweight increases pressure through the knee joint. You should exercise regularly and eat a balanced and healthy diet. You should aim to keep your weight as close as possible to the ideal for your height and age.

Exercise

Exercises are important in helping to keep your joints moving if you have osteoarthritis. They will help to improve the strength and tone of muscles that control the affected joint, thereby reducing pain and increasing joint stability. It is important to strike a balance between too much activity, which may increase joint pain, and too little, which can allow joints to stiffen. Exercise should not increase your pain.

For osteoarthritis it is advisable to exercise little and often and progress as you are able to. Low impact exercise such as swimming and cycling are beneficial for people with osteoarthritis.

Your GP can provide an affordable way of exercising using local services via an exercise prescription.

Pain control

Pain control is an important part of managing osteoarthritis. Do not wait until the pain is too severe before taking painkillers. If your pain is not adequately controlled, please consult your GP or pharmacist.

If your pain flares up, you may find that applying ice packs or heat via a hot water bottle or wheat bag helps. You may also get some symptom relief through a transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation (TENS) machine. This is a small, battery operated, pain relieving device.

Walking aids

Using a walking stick may help to improve your confidence and balance and reduce pain.

Pacing

Pacing achieves a good balance between rest and activity. When you start to exercise it may seem as if you are not doing enough to improve your symptoms but pacing allows your muscles and joints to adapt to extra activity without causing more pain.

If you feel you need more assistance then your GP can refer you to see a physiotherapist to discuss your individual concerns.