

Osteoarthritis

What is osteoarthritis?

Arthritis means inflammation of joints.

Osteoarthritis is the most common form.

What causes osteoarthritis?

All normal joints are being repaired as we use them every day. In some people there is severe wear and tear and/or this repair process becomes faulty in some way. The cartilage which covers the bone, becomes damaged, worn and inflamed. This causes pain and stiffness.

How is osteoarthritis treated?

The most important things are exercise and losing weight (if you need to).

Exercise

- **Exercise does not make osteoarthritis worse.**
- Exercise helps with pain and movement and works better than any tablet.
- It is good to see a physiotherapist if you can, to work out the best exercises for you.
- Do your exercises at a time of day when you feel better
- You may want to take a pain killer before exercise.
- Don't worry if you feel discomfort during or after exercise. This does not mean you have done damage. Stiffness and aches will get better after a few days and will happen less as you get used to exercise.

Losing weight

- Weight reduction improves pain and movement, especially for knee osteoarthritis.
- Speak to your clinician about this. Seeing a nutritionist and a physiotherapist for advice will be helpful.

Pain killers

- There is no medicine that will cure osteoarthritis.
- Medication for pain relief can be useful in combination with exercise and weight loss. This might be a gel/spray to put onto the affected joint, or a tablet.
- Many tablets have side effects and are not good to take all the time. Your clinician will advise.

Walking sticks

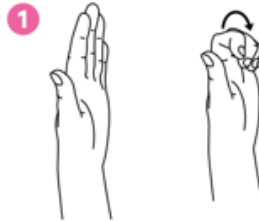
- These can be very helpful, but they need to be fitted correctly.

Injections

- Sometimes a steroid can be injected into the painful joint.

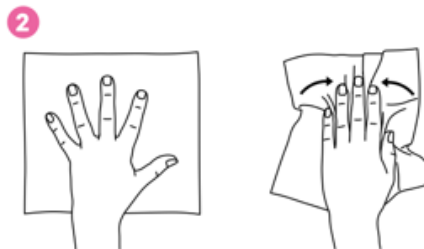
Surgery

- If pain and stiffness are not manageable despite all the above measures, then surgery for a joint replacement may be suggested.
- Surgery is not necessary or possible for *all* people with arthritis, which is why the above measures are so important.



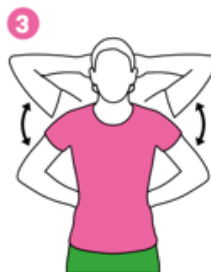
1. Finger bend

Hold your hand out, with your fingers straight. Then bend the fingers down at the first two joints and straighten again. Try to repeat this 10 times with each hand, 3 times a day.



2. Finger strengthening

Put the palm of your hand on a towel on a table, with your fingers apart. Pull your fingers together while pushing your hand down into the table, bunching up the towel between your fingers. Try to repeat this 10 times with each hand, 3 times a day.



3. Arm lifts

Place your hands behind your head so your elbows are pointing to the sides and pressed back as far as you can. Hold for five seconds. Then place your hands behind your back, again keeping your elbows pointing out and pressed back as far as you can. Hold for five seconds. Do each movement five times.



4. Arm stretch

Stand with your arms relaxed at your sides. Raise your arms as far as you can and hold for 5 to 10 seconds. Lower your arms and repeat the movement five times. You can do this exercise by raising your arms either in front of you, or to the side. Doing some of each will stretch more muscles.



5. Straight-leg raise

Sit in a chair, with your back straight, shoulders back and head level. Straighten and raise one leg. Hold for a slow count to 10, then slowly put your leg on the floor. Repeat this at least 10 times for each leg. As the exercise becomes easier, try it with light ankle weights and pull your toes towards you, so you feel a stretch at the back of your lower leg.



6. Hip extension

Move your leg backwards, keeping your knee straight. Clench your buttock tightly and hold for five seconds. Don't lean forwards. Hold onto a chair or work surface for support.

7. Knee rolls

Lie on your back, with bent knees and your feet together. Roll your knees to one side, keeping your shoulders flat on the bed or floor, and hold the position for 10 seconds. Roll your knees back to the start position, then over to the other side and repeat. Do this exercise three times on each side.

