

## Osteoarthritis treatment options

|   | EXERCISE AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY   | WEIGHT LOSS  |
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| <b>What would I have to do?</b>                                     | <p>Exercise is universally recommended for everyone with osteoarthritis. It's important to find a type that works best for you and there are many options:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strength training</li> <li>• Aerobic, such as walking or cycling</li> <li>• Water exercise</li> <li>• Tai Chi</li> </ul> <p>Exercise should be performed regularly 3-5x each week at a moderate level engaging in activities that strengthen muscles around the joints and increase fitness.</p> | <p>Weight loss is recommended if you are overweight. Achieving and maintaining weight loss requires making changes to your lifestyle. This involves changing your eating and drinking habits and incorporating physical activity and exercise.</p>   |
| <b>What are the benefits of this treatment?</b>                     | <p>Exercise can help reduce joint pain, and improve function, general well-being and mood. Benefits of exercise on pain are greater or similar to simple analgesic drugs and oral NSAIDs but without the side effects.</p> <p>Exercising may also help you to avoid or delay the need for medicines or surgery.</p> <p>Exercise may help control body weight and has a range of other health benefits.</p>   | <p>Even a small amount of weight loss can be beneficial but the more weight you lose, the greater the benefits. Research has shown that losing between 5-10% of body weight can reduce knee pain and improve function. Greater improvements are seen if you combine dietary modification with exercise. There has been limited research investigating the effects of weight loss on joint symptoms in people with hip osteoarthritis. Weight loss also has a range of other health benefits.</p> |
| <b>Are there any risks to this treatment?</b>                       | <p>Exercise is safe for people with osteoarthritis. You may experience some temporary increase in joint pain, stiffness, and swelling, but this does not mean that your osteoarthritis is getting worse. Your exercise program can be altered to find the one that suits you best.</p>   | <p>It can be difficult to lose weight and to maintain the weight loss. This may cause negative feelings and you may feel upset or frustrated about a lack of results.</p>  |
| <b>How long will it take me to feel better after the treatment?</b> | <p>Feelings of well-being may occur immediately after exercise. While benefits are generally apparent after a few weeks, it may take up to 12 weeks for maximal improvements in pain and function.</p>   | <p>This varies from person to person depending on how long it takes to lose weight. Generally maximum benefits are seen around 6 months.</p>   |

| MEDICATIONS   | INJECTIONS  | PAIN-COPING ACTIVITIES   |
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| <p>The medications often recommended for osteoarthritis include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Topical analgesics</b> – these are rubbed into the skin over the knee to relieve pain (e.g. capsaicin, non steroidal anti-inflammatory medications (NSAIDs))</li> <li>• <b>Oral analgesics</b> – these are taken by mouth to relieve pain (e.g. paracetamol, oral NSAIDs)</li> </ul> <p>It is important to note that oral opioids are not recommended as they have small (if any) benefit and there is a substantial risk of serious harm.</p> | <p>This involves the injection of medication by a doctor directly into the joint. Two commonly used injections for osteoarthritis are corticosteroids and hyaluronic acid. These are often reserved for individuals who are not getting relief with painkillers or non-medication treatments.</p> | <p>Our thoughts can heavily influence pain intensity as well as our response to pain. People with osteoarthritis can often have low mood or anxiety, further increasing pain. Pain-coping activities can be used to help reduce negative thoughts and feelings which may then reduce the pain you experience. They can also teach you useful skills to help you cope with pain.</p> <p>Techniques available include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Counselling</li> <li>• Cognitive Behavioural Therapy</li> <li>• Relaxation</li> <li>• Mindfulness</li> </ul> |
| <p>Topical and oral analgesics can be beneficial short-term pain relievers for osteoarthritis. Combining them with non-medication strategies such as exercise may reduce the amount of medication needed.</p>   | <p>Corticosteroids can provide quick, short term pain relief. Previous research has generally shown little effect for hyaluronic acid injections compared with placebo injections (saline solution) for knee osteoarthritis.</p>  | <p>Pain-coping activities can help improve mood, by lessening feelings of depression or anxiety, as well as reduce pain and improve function. They can also help with sleep quality and weight-loss efforts.</p>   |
| <p>Topical analgesics may have side effects such as local irritation. Both oral NSAIDs and paracetamol can have negative side effects on your heart, kidneys, and digestive system especially with prolonged use. The risk of having a problem depends on individual factors such as other health conditions.</p>   | <p>There is a small risk associated with injections such as infection in the joint or increased pain in the joint immediately after. Other side effects include alterations in blood sugar from corticosteroids.</p>  | <p>It can be emotionally overwhelming or confronting when developing skills to become more aware of negative thoughts and how to deal with them.</p>   |
| <p>Pain relief may start to occur after a couple of days when you begin taking medication but the relief is often short-term. Medications will affect people differently so it is important to discuss this with your doctor or pharmacist.</p>   | <p>Rapid pain relief may occur for some individuals after 24-48 hours. These effects are generally short lasting and are often gone after 4 to 12 weeks.</p>  | <p>Pain-coping activities may take some time and practice in order for benefits to become apparent. Relaxation strategies may help immediately after a session to reduce increased muscle tension, negative feelings and stress.</p>   |