

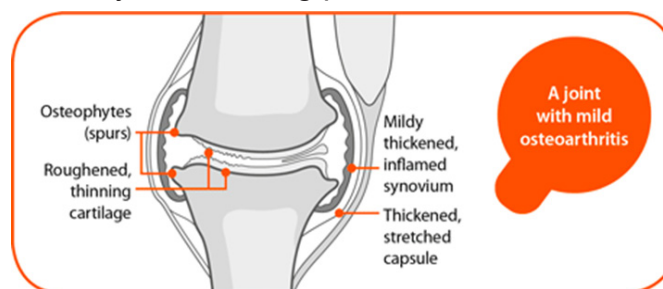
# Osteoarthritis, Exercise and Physiotherapy

## What is osteoarthritis (OA)

- OA is one of the main causes of pain and disability worldwide.
- Osteoarthritis is a condition where joints become painful and stiff, and can present with joint swelling. This can lead to limited function and reduced quality of life.
- It's the most common type of arthritis in the United Kingdom. There is no cure for osteoarthritis.
- The most commonly affected joints are the knees, hips and small hand joints.

## What causes OA

- Localised loss of cartilage, remodelling of adjacent bone and associated inflammation.
- A variety of traumas may trigger the need for a joint to repair
- Osteoarthritis includes a slow but efficient repair process
- Often the structure of the joint changes but it can remain symptom free
- In some people, because of either overwhelming trauma or compromised repair, the process cannot compensate, resulting in ongoing pain
- So some people can get pain with OA, whilst others do not
- There is also a great deal of evidence that better understanding of your osteoarthritis, and exercise are very effective ways of reducing pain



## How can I manage the symptoms of my Osteoarthritis?

### Exercise for osteoarthritis

Exercise has been found to be beneficial in managing symptoms of osteoarthritis. A combination of strengthening exercises for the joint and general aerobic exercise has been recommended. Stretching can also be helpful. Try to do at least 150 minutes (2 hours and 30 minutes) of moderate-intensity aerobic activity (such as cycling or fast walking) every week to build up your muscle strength and keep yourself generally healthy.

### Graded exercise and pacing

Osteoarthritis symptoms can be variable, therefore it is important to be able to manage your good days and bad days as best as you can. Doing a small amount of exercises and building up slowly can be helpful to aid the symptoms of osteoarthritis. It is also important that you take some regular breaks. Pacing means breaking up your daily activities and exercise regime so you don't do too



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much to flair up your symptoms.

### Managing your pain

Managing your pain is an important part of the overall management of osteoarthritis. Paracetamol should be consider for pain relief in addition to other treatments. Regular dosing may be required. Paracetamol and/or topical non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) should be considered. Speak to your GP regarding the prescription of further pain relief if this does not help.

### Thermotherapy- ice/heat

The use of heat or ice can be useful for managing symptoms of osteoarthritis, alongside other treatments. Ice can be helpful when your joint is more swollen.

### Weight management / Diet

Maintaining a healthy weight and a balanced healthy diet can also help to manage symptoms of osteoarthritis. Losing weight can reduce additional stress on joints that can cause cartilage to wear away. Easing the pressure on joints by losing weight can also reduce pain in osteoarthritis affected joints, which will help you feel and move much better.

### Other treatment options

Trans electrical Nerve stimulation can be a useful adjunct to manage symptoms of pain with arthritis, alongside other treatments. Appropriate footwear and bracing can be helpful for some people to help manage osteoarthritis. OA is a condition that can be self-managed and treated

### Common Myths regarding OA

- There is often a weak link between X-ray findings and symptoms of osteoarthritis
- Osteoarthritis is not caused by ageing and does not necessarily deteriorate
- Exercise will not cause your joints to wear out

### The aim of physiotherapy in the management of osteoarthritis is:

- To help you learn how to manage this condition long-term and limit its' effect on your quality of life.
- To help reduce pain, improve physical function and overall wellbeing
- May help to delay or avoid surgery
- Helps promote physical exercise and help people to appreciate and understand the benefits of exercise
- To help you to become more confident in managing your osteoarthritis independently

### How to see a physiotherapist about your osetoarthritis:

- You can refer yourself to physiotherapy, or discuss this with your GP who will also be able to refer you
- You can fill in the referral form on the website and either email it back or hand it into Therapy Services reception at the hospital

Self referral forms for physiotherapy can be found at:

<https://www.roh.nhs.uk/patient-information/therapy-services/physiotherapy/473-physiotherapy-self->



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## **Osteoarthritis, Exercise and Physiotherapy**

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referral-form

Further information about Osteoarthritis:

Arthritis Care: [www.versusarthritis.org](http://www.versusarthritis.org)

References

NICE guidelines Osteoarthritis: care and management (2014)

Hurley et al (2003) In Osteoarthritis, the Psychosocial Benefits of Exercise Are as Important as Physiological Improvements