

Taking Control of your Osteoarthritis

This patient guide will help you work with your Healthcare team to develop an action plan for treating your osteoarthritis. By combining both self-management and medical care—you can live a normal, active life.

Keeping Active

Low-Impact Activities

Activities that are easy on the knees include biking, swimming, and water aerobics. Being active may also help you lose weight, which takes pressure off joints. Recreational activities are used for leisure and shaped by individual interest. An example of a recreational activity is gardening. For favorite activities, like golf, ask your doctor or physical therapist about how to modify painful moves.

How Much Exercise?

There are exercises you can do at home to strengthening your muscles. Home-based quadriceps and abductor strengthening exercises can be done at home to strengthen your muscles. (See the other pages for suggested exercises) Thirty minutes a day is a good goal. Start small, such as 10 minutes every other day. If you don't have pain, exercise more to meet the goal.

When you start to exercise, some mild muscle soreness is normal. It's OK to work through it. Check with your doctor if you want to try over-the-counter pain relievers like acetaminophen, ibuprofen, or naproxen to help the soreness.

Walking

Even if you have stiff or sore knees, walking may be a great exercise. Start slow and keep at it. Walking can ease joint pain, strengthen leg muscles, improve posture (stand tall when you walk), and improve flexibility. It's also good for your heart. Always get approval from your clinician before starting any new activity or exercise. When starting your new activity or exercise start and increase slowly. Drink plenty of water, especially on hot days and wear clothes that will be comfortable

Physiotherapy

Physiotherapy can play an important role in the management of OA. Goals of physiotherapy are to decrease inflammation, improve movement of joints and strengthening the muscles around the joint. You may not need to see a physical therapist on a regular basis. A physical therapist will collaborate with you to determine the best plan of care for you. A physical therapist can help teach you about proper exercise skills to minimize the stress on the joints.

Swimming

Water exercise takes weight off painful joints. Many community and hospital wellness centers, gyms, and pools offer classes for people with arthritis.



Home Exercise - for Hip OA

Standing Straight Leg Raise Abduction

Stand and hold the back of a chair for balance. Place your weight on your left leg. Stand tall and lift the right leg out to the side -- keep the right leg straight and outer leg muscles tensed.

Hold 3 seconds, then slowly lower the right leg. Do two sets of 10 repetitions. Switch legs after each set.

Stretching improves range of motion and keeps you flexible.



One Leg Balance

Stand behind your kitchen counter or a back of a chair, without holding on, and slowly lift one foot off the floor. The goal is to stay balanced for 20 seconds without grabbing counter. Do this move twice, then switch sides.

This move helps you bend over or get in and out of cars.



Side Leg Raise Extension

Lie on your side, stack your hips and extend both legs. Rest your lower arm under your head and your top arm on your top hip. Slowly lift the top leg keeping the feet and knees pointing forward. Lower the leg with control. Repeat 10 times each side for up to three sets.

Do not allow low back to extend.

Do not lift leg too high (more than 20 degrees)

Strengthen hip abductor muscles.



Side lying hip abduction

Lie on your side with your bottom knee bent. Keep your top leg straight and lift it up 30-45 degrees. Hold for 2 seconds and return slowly.

Do not bend your top knee.

Do not lift leg higher than 45 degrees.

Gluteus medius exercise



Squat with Band

See Knee Exercise

Strengthen quadriceps, gluteus, hip abductors, and adductors

Glut Set

Lie on your back with knees bent and feet on the floor. Squeeze your buttocks without lifting your hips off the surface. Hold for a second and relax. Repeat

Do not hold your breath.

Do not allow pelvis to move.

Gluteus medius exercise



Bridging

Slowly lower hips to the surface and squeeze your buttocks. Keeping abdominals tight, lift your buttocks off of the surface keep shoulder blades on the surface. Keep hips/pelvis level.

Do not arch your back.

Do not raise your hips too far off of the surface.

For core muscles - abdominals, gluteals, and back extensors



Home Exercise - for Knee OA

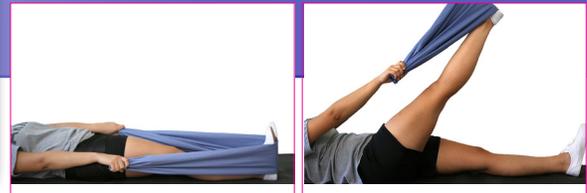
To get the most out of your stretches, warm up first with a 5-minute walk.

Hamstring Stretch

Lie down. Loop a bed sheet (or a towel) around your right foot. Use the sheet to help pull the straight leg up and stretch it.

Hold for 20 seconds, then lower the leg. Repeat twice. Then, switch legs.

Stretching improves range of motion and keeps you flexible.



Calf Stretch

Hold onto a chair for balance. Bend your right leg. Step back with your left leg, and slowly straighten it behind you. Press your left heel toward the floor. You should feel the stretch in the calf of your back leg.

Hold for 20 seconds. Repeat twice. Then switch legs.

Stretching exercises also help prevent pain and injury.



Straight Leg Raise

Lie on the floor, upper body supported by your elbows. Bend your left knee, foot on the floor. Keep the right leg straight, toes pointed up. Tighten your thigh muscles and raise your right leg.

Hold for 3 seconds. Keep your thigh muscles tight and slowly lower your leg to the ground. Touch and raise again. Repeat 10 times, then switch legs.

Do not raise your straight leg more than 45 degrees.

Build muscle strength to help support weak joints.



Quad Set

Start by lying on the floor. (Put a towel roll under your knee) Keep both legs and heels on ground. Simply tighten the muscle on top of your thigh.

Hold the left leg tense for 5 seconds. Keep breathing.

Do two sets of 10 repetitions. Switch legs after each set.

Do not let your buttock come off the floor/bed.

Help to strengthen the quadriceps muscle



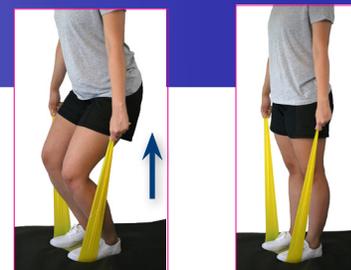
Squat with Band

Stand with both knees slightly bent and the exercise band tucked under your feet. Pull the band to hip height and straighten your knees against the resistance of the exercise band.

Hold for 3 second and return slowly. Repeat 5 times.

Do not bend your knees more than 45 degrees.

Strengthen quadriceps, gluteus, hip abductors, and adductors





Coping with the Pain

Keep being Active

Too much rest can weaken your muscles, which can worsen joint pain. Find an activity program that is safe for your knees. If you're not sure which motions are safe or how much you can do, talk with your healthcare provider or a physical therapist.

Risk of Falling

A painful or unstable knee can make a fall more likely, which can cause further knee damage. Lower your risk of falling by making sure your home is well lit, using handrails on staircases. Be careful using a ladder or foot stool if you need to reach something from a high shelf.

Watch your weight.

Eat a well-balanced meal with portion control to nourish your body. If you are overweight, losing weight reduces the stress on your knee. Extra weight puts extra pressure on the joints of the hip and knee which can cause more damage and pain. Even small changes can make a difference.

Consider a walking aid.

A crutch or cane can take the stress off your knee. Knee splints and braces can also help you stay stable.

Watch your Shoes

Cushioned insoles can reduce stress on your knees. For knee osteoarthritis, consider special insoles that you put in your shoe. To find the appropriate insole, speak with your healthcare provider or a physical therapist.

High Impact Exercise

High-impact exercises can further injure painful knees. Avoid jarring, repetitive exercises such as running, jumping, and kickboxing. Also avoid doing exercises such as lunges and deep squats that put a lot of stress on your knees. These can worsen pain and may cause injury.

New Symptoms

If your knee pain is new, don't ignore them. See to your healthcare provider as soon as possible, so you can prevent any further damage

If you experience any of the following, call your healthcare provider immediately:

- You have severe, unexplained joint pain that persists more than 3 days
- The joint is significantly swollen
- You have a hard time moving the joint
- Your skin around the joint is red or hot to the touch
- You have a fever or have lost weight unintentionally

This guide is based on the VA/DoD Clinical Practice Guideline for Non-surgery Management of Hip and Knee Osteoarthritis (2014). The guideline includes evidence-based recommendations for diagnosis and management of patients with hip and knee pain. The full text of the Guideline can be found at:
<https://www.qmo.amedd.army.mil> or <http://www.healthquality.va.gov>

