

# Exercising with osteoarthritis

## Exercise first

Exercise and physical activity are safe and evidence-based first line management strategies for osteoarthritis (OA).

They can:

- delay or prevent joint replacement
- delay or prevent functional decline
- reduce joint pain



## Can I exercise?

Exercise is appropriate for ALL people with OA, irrespective of age, severity of OA symptoms or level of disability.

Exercise programmes can be prescribed and tailored to suit the needs of the individual, to ensure exercise is both achievable and safe.



## How does exercise help?

It can be hard to keep moving when you have arthritis but staying as active as possible can improve pain, reduce other symptoms of OA and help you stay independent. A physiotherapist can help make it easier.

Exercise can:

- reduce **pain**
- increase your **physical function** and ability to perform activities that matter to you
- improve your **muscle strength**, which protects and supports your joints
- reduce **joint stiffness**
- improve your **balance** and potentially reduce your risk of falls



- improve **energy levels** and feelings of tiredness
- help you maintain a **healthy weight**, which is important for OA management
- boost your **mood**
- increase **cardiovascular fitness**
- help you **sleep better**

Your physiotherapist may also recommend **mobilisation** and **stretching**, particularly for hip osteoarthritis.

## Exercise is medicine

Regular strengthening exercises and physical activity will help you manage your OA so you can do the everyday things that are important to you.

Research on hip and knee OA shows that compared to no exercise, doing exercise significantly helps reduce pain, more than paracetamol. In this context, exercise is 'medicine'.



## What exercise should I do?

Exercise should be the core treatment for your OA. It should include:

- local muscle strengthening
- joint motion
- normal movement patterns
- general physical activity to increase aerobic fitness and minimise sedentary time



**Osteoarthritis can be managed successfully. Seek advice from a physiotherapist about the right types of exercise for you.**



## Activity pacing

Build slowly and pace yourself so you can reach recommended levels of physical activity.



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