

Osteoarthritis (OA) of the Hip

Information and Exercise Leaflet for Patient's and Carers

What is osteoarthritis?

Arthritis means inflammation of the joints. Osteoarthritis (OA) is the most common form of arthritis in the UK. OA mainly affects the joint cartilage and the bone tissue next to the cartilage, causing pain, swelling and stiffness.

What causes osteoarthritis?

All normal joints and joint tissues are constantly undergoing some form of repair because of the demands that is placed on them through our daily activities. However, in some people, it seems that this repair process becomes faulty in some way and OA develops.

In joints with OA, the joint cartilage and bone tissue next to the cartilage can break down and bony growths (osteophytes) can develop around the joint edges, which may be seen on X-rays. The joints and the surrounding tissues can also become inflamed. This is called Synovitis.

Factors that may play a role in the development of OA include:

- **Age:** OA becomes more common with increasing age.
- **Genetics:** OA may run in families, although studies have not identified a single gene responsible.
- **Obesity:** Hip OA is more likely to develop, or be more severe, in obese people. This is because there is an increased load on the joints.
- **Your sex:** Women are more likely to develop OA than men.
- **Previous joint injury, damage or deformity:** Overusing your joint when it has not had enough time to heal from a previous injury.

What are the symptoms of osteoarthritis?

- In some cases, people do not experience any symptoms at all. Some people can have X-ray changes that indicate some degree of OA but have no, or only very mild, symptoms.

- Pain (usually in the groin or outer aspect of the hip), stiffness, and limitation of movement of the joint are typical. The stiffness tends to be worse first thing in the morning but tends to loosen up after half an hour or so.
- You may have reduced mobility, pain with walking and difficulty in putting your shoes and socks on and getting in and out of a car.

Do I need any tests?

Your doctor can often diagnose osteoarthritis based on your age, symptoms and examination of your affected joints. Tests such as X-rays or blood tests are usually not needed. Sometimes, however, your doctor may suggest X-rays or other tests if they are uncertain about the diagnosis and want to exclude other problems.

What is the outlook for people with osteoarthritis?

The severity of symptoms can vary. In many people, OA is mild and does not impact greatly on quality of life. However, in some people, the severity of OA and the disability it causes can impact greatly on quality of life and function.

What are the aims of physiotherapy?

The aim of physiotherapy is to increase joint mobility, improve muscle strength and try and relieve pain through providing an exercise program tailored to your needs. These usually involve stretches, strength exercises and possibly a general aerobic fitness program.

Treatment of osteoarthritis:

Exercise

If possible, exercise regularly. This helps to strengthen the muscles around affected joints, to keep you fit, and to maintain a good range of joint movement. It will also help you to manage/lose weight and is a good form of stress relief.

Weight Management

If you are overweight, try to lose some weight as the extra load placed on your hips can make symptoms worse. Even a modest weight loss can make quite a difference.

Walking aids

If you have OA of your hip or knee when walking, try using a walking stick. Hold it in the hand on the opposite side of the body to the affected joint. This takes some pressure off the affected joint and helps to ease symptoms in some cases.

Other therapies

- Some people find that they can also get some pain relief from using hot or cold packs.
- Sometimes manual therapy (such as manipulation, mobilisation, or soft tissue techniques) can help improve pain, alongside exercises. Manual therapy alone will not improve your symptoms.

Warning Signs

If you have severe pain which is getting worse over several weeks, if you are unwell with back or full leg pain, or under the age of 16 years, you should consult your doctor.

The following symptoms are very rare, but if you suddenly develop any of them, you should consult your doctor straightaway.

- Significant swelling to the leg not just the hip
- Feeling generally unwell
- Constant night pain (unable to rest/sleep)
- Unexplained weight loss
- Signs of infection for example night sweats that are out of the ordinary and high temperature
- Numbness, pins and needles, or weakness in both legs
- Difficulty passing or controlling urine or numbness around your back passage or genitals
- Unsteadiness on your feet
- Unable to put any weight through your leg
- A lump in your groin region
- Testicular pain or swelling

If your symptoms fail to improve within 6 weeks with this regime you should contact your doctor for a physiotherapy referral.

If this is the case remember to bring a pair of shorts to change in to, this will help the physiotherapist diagnose your problem.

Exercises for Osteoarthritis of the Hip

The aims of these exercises are to help you move normally and safely. The pictures show the movement.

How many times and how often? - Start with 5 of each - Add one or two more every few days
- Try to exercise about 2 times a day - Be guided by your pain.

Stop these exercises if you feel they are - Making your symptoms worse or bringing on new pain.



Straight Leg Raise Single Leg Low

Lie on the floor or bed. Bend one knee with your foot resting on the floor or bed. Lift one leg about 10 inches off the floor. Hold, and return to the start position. Repeat as required. This is a hip flexor strengthening exercise.

Video: <https://youtu.be/kYeyBZ4d1g>



Shoulder Bridge / Spine Curls

Adopt the supine start position. Bring your heels slightly closer to your bottom to reduce the stress on your Hamstrings. Exhale as you tilt your pelvis back underneath you, pressing your lower back into the floor. Slowly roll your spine off the mat one vertebra at a time to the tips of your shoulder blades. Hold this position as you inhale. Exhale, rolling the spine back down, one vertebra at a time. Make sure you keep your weight equal through both feet. Repeat as required.

Video: <http://youtu.be/R1qxWNjcleU>



Full Squat

Open your legs slightly wider than shoulder width, and bend your knees to the full squat (90-degrees) position. Your feet can be pointing directly forwards, or turned out slightly. Make sure you keep the middle of your knee-cap in line with the middle toes of your foot. Always keep your feet flat on the ground.

Video: http://youtu.be/d_xB-41ieqw



There will be information about the local services that exist within the waiting areas of the physiotherapy department and your treating clinician will be able to help signpost you to appropriate services.

The websites listed below give more information on local services available:

- Blackburn and Darwen - <https://refreshbwd.com/>
- East Lancashire - <http://www.upandactive.co.uk/>

Public Health England <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/public-health- england>

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