

Knee pain

Physiotherapy & Occupational Therapy

The prevention of infection is a major priority in all healthcare and everyone has a part to play.

- Please decontaminate your hands frequently for 20 seconds using soap and water or alcohol gel if available
- If you have symptoms of diarrhoea and/or vomiting, cough or other respiratory symptoms, a temperature or any loss of taste or smell please do not visit the hospital or any other care facility and seek advice from 111
- Keep the environment clean and tidy
- Let's work together to keep infections out of our hospitals and care homes.

Introduction

Many of us will experience knee pain at some point in our lives. Although it can be very painful, it is rarely serious. For most people knee pain will normally resolve within six to 12 weeks without any treatment.

Common causes

A number of factors have been associated with knee pain. These include:

- A sprain, strain or injury such as a twist or fall
- A sudden increase or decrease in your normal activity or exercise levels
- Muscle weakness
- Following a period of increased stress, worry or low mood
- Following a period of poor sleep, fatigue or feeling run down
- Other lifestyle factors such as being overweight and smoking
- A flare up of longstanding knee pain
- Other conditions

Common symptoms

These include:

- Pain
- Swelling
- Stiffness
- Giving way

You may experience constant or intermittent (comes and goes) symptoms that are aggravated by certain activities and reduced by others.

What can I do to help it?

- In the first few days after an onset of knee pain, changing or reducing your usual activities may help. However, there is strong evidence that keeping active and gradually returning to all your usual activities and exercise will help you recover
- It is normal to experience some pain during your recovery, but it does not mean you are causing any harm or damage to your knee
- Try to stay at work or return as soon as you are able. Your employer, GP or health practitioner will be able to advise on how to return to your normal work duties

Try some of these self-help tips to aid your recovery:

- Apply a heat or icepack, whichever you find most helpful to the painful area – for up to 15 minutes. **Never apply heat or ice directly to the skin**
- A short course of simple pain medication as advised by your pharmacist or GP may help reduce pain and allow you to move more comfortably
- Keep moving. Regular movement and exercise is safe and helpful for knee pain. It is important to build up gradually – the exercise or activity you enjoy most, is likely to help your recovery
- Try and get a good night's sleep for example, place a pillow between your knees, and rest your leg on the pillow when lying on your non-painful side
- Good sleep habits and managing stress may help you cope better with your pain

Facts about knee pain

- Knee pain is common WITHOUT any damage to your joints, ligaments, or tendons
- X-rays and scans often DO NOT show the cause of your pain
- Movement and exercise is NOT harmful for your knee joint
- Your knee can become stronger and healthier with regular movement and exercise
- Walking and general exercises such as squatting are safe and great exercises to strengthen the muscles around your knee - as long as you build them up gradually
- Creaking or clicking knee joints are common in people without knee pain. It is a rarely a sign of harm or damage
- If you are overweight - losing weight by getting more active and improving your diet can improve your knee pain by reducing inflammation in your body and the load on your knee joint
- Improving your sleep and general health are all also important for your knee pain



4 Things You Should Know About Knee Pain

1 Knee pain is common.

10%



1 in 10 people are affected by knee pain at some point in their life

2 Causes of pain go beyond the knee.

Lots of things can influence your level of pain and disability.



Increased belly fat

1. Increased inflammation
2. More load on joint



Stress + Depression + Lack of sleep

1. Lower pain threshold
2. Increased sensitivity



Weakness + Activity avoidance

1. Increased vulnerability
2. More stress on knee



Over activity

1. Tissue sensitivity
2. Inflammation

3 Scans can be misleading.



How your knee looks on a scan does not predict how much pain you feel or how much you can do with it. Findings such as cartilage tears, arthritic changes and joint narrowing are very common in people without pain, especially as we get older.

4 Surgery is not always the answer.

Up to
20%
of people do **NOT** benefit
from a knee replacement.



Arthroscopic surgery is
no more effective than
sham surgery
for knee arthritis

✓ What can you do for knee pain?

1. Identify the factors that contribute to your knee pain
2. Develop a positive attitude and build confidence towards your knee
3. Get your knee, hip and ankle strong
4. Get physically active
5. Attain a healthy body weight
6. Get good sleep and manage stress and mental health

80%

Of people on a wait list for
knee replacement surgery did
NOT need the surgery after
following this program



When should I seek medical advice?

Call your gp surgery if

- Your pain is getting worse
- You have tried the self-help tips for three to four weeks and the symptoms have not improved

Seek immediate medical advice if

- After an injury for example, a fall or twisting movement
 - You have difficulty standing or walking
 - If you are unable to straighten your knee for example, gets stuck in one position
 - If your knee is swollen and or giving way
- You have a fever, and your knee is hot, red, swollen and painful

Do I need an X-ray or scan?

- X-rays or scans are NOT usually required to diagnose knee pain
- X-rays or scans are NOT able to tell us how much pain you are experiencing
- X-rays and scans often show meniscal tears, joint narrowing and osteoarthritis which are common in people WITHOUT knee pain. These findings are unlikely to change the way you manage your pain
- X-rays and scans are best used where a serious injury (for example, a broken bone) or conditions such as cancer or infection are suspected

Why exercise?

It is important to get the knee moving early in order to gain mobility, strength and return to normal function. Early exercise can have a positive influence on tissue healing and reduce the potential for joint and soft tissue stiffness.

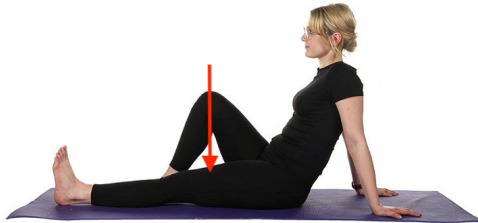
Knee exercises

These are suggested exercises and are to be performed within comfortable limits. If you have any concerns about any of the exercises, please seek medical advice.

1. Sitting with your legs out in front of you and the back well supported. Slide the heel of the affected side up towards your bottom as far as you can, then slide it back to the starting position. Repeat 10 times, two times per day.



2. Sitting on a firm surface with the back supported. Unaffected knee bent and foot flat and the affected leg outstretched, push the knee down towards the floor to tighten the thigh muscle and pull the foot back towards you at the ankle. The heel may lift off the floor but the leg should remain in contact with the floor. Hold for the count of five and relax. Repeat 10 times, two times per day.



3. Sitting on a firm surface legs outstretched and back supported. Place a rolled up towel under the affected knee. Keeping the knee in contact with the roll, lift the lower leg and foot off the floor, pressing the knee into the towel. You should feel the thigh muscle tighten. Hold for a count of five. Repeat 10 times, two times per day.



4. Lie on your back with the unaffected leg straight. Bend the hip and knee of the affected side to 90 degrees, holding behind the knee with your hand. Slowly straighten the knee and bring your foot flat towards the ceiling as far as you can. The stretch should be gentle and sustained. Hold the position for 20 seconds. Repeat three times, two times per day.



5. Standing at a wall or counter top, with one foot forward and one back. Keep the toes pointing forward throughout. Bend the front knee and gently push the hips forward, keeping the back knee straight. You will feel a stretch in the calf of the back leg. Hold the stretch for 20 seconds. Repeat two to three times, twice per day. Take the stretch to the end of the range but never force it.



6. Sit on a chair toward the front of the seat. Feet firmly on the floor, hip width apart. Arms outstretched. Ensure the chair is stable. Lean forward to take the weight onto the feet and come up into standing position. Do not allow the knees to come together as your move into standing. Once in standing, begin to bend the knees again and lean slightly forward to allow the bottom to stick out and sit back down onto the front of the seat. The knees should remain apart throughout. The movement is slow and controlled. Repeat 10 times, two to three times per day.



7. Standing in an upright position, arms folded in front, feet hip distance apart. Bend the knees as if you were to sit on a chair. Do not allow the knees to come forward over the toes, keep the knees apart throughout the exercise. Push through the feet and squeeze the bottom to return to standing. Repeat 10 times, two to three times per day.



8. Standing in front of the bottom step, place the affected leg on the step and transfer the weight onto that leg without pushing off through the other leg. Stretch the knee. Keeping the affected leg on the step, slowly bend that knee, lowering the other foot to the floor and step off the step. Repeat 10 times, two times per day. The picture shows the arms outstretched in front, however, you can use the wall or a handrail for support if necessary.



9. Standing on the affected leg at a counter top or wall. Use your hands for balance only. Gently bend the knee, keeping your balance, then straighten the knee back to the starting position. Repeat 10 times, two times per day.



Gradually

- Return to your normal activities
- Resume hobbies and sports

If you are unsure of when to progress your exercises, or you have any concerns about your injury please use the PHIO self-referral platform or scan the QR code below.



Do I need a fit note?

- If you're off work sick for **seven days or less**, your employer will normally ask you to complete a self-certificate for sick leave as soon as you return to work
- If you're off work sick for **more than seven days** your employer will normally ask for a fit note (or Statement of Fitness for Work) from your GP or hospital doctor
- You can read more information here <https://www.nhs.uk/common-health-questions/caring-carers-and-long-term-conditions/when-do-i-need-a-fit-note/>

Useful websites and resources

- Knee pain booklet Versus Arthritis knee pain information booklet (PDF) <https://www.arthritis-uk.org/media/23090/knee-pain-information-booklet.pdf>
- Exercises for the knees <https://www.arthritis-uk.org/information-and-support/living-with-arthritis/health-and-wellbeing/exercising-with-arthritis/exercises-for-healthy-joints/exercises-for-the-knees/>
- 'If your knee hurts keep exercising' <https://theconversation.com/if-your-knee-hurts-keep-exercising-says-expert-93377>

Accessing information and support to make healthy lifestyle choices

Online support:

Exercise

- <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/?tabname=exercise-tips>
- <https://www.nhs.uk>conditions>nhs-fitness-studio>

Sleep

- <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/sleep-and-tiredness/10-tips-to-beat-insomnia/>

Diet

- <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/>
- <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-weight/start-the-nhs-weight-loss-plan/>

Emotional well being

- <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/improve-mental-wellbeing/>

English

If you need information in another way like easy read or a different language please let us know.

If you need an interpreter or assistance please let us know.

Lithuanian

Jeigu norėtumėte, kad informacija jums būtų pateikta kitu būdu, pavyzdžiui, supaprastinta forma ar kita kalba, prašome mums apie tai pranešti.

Jeigu jums reikia vertėjo ar kitos pagalbos, prašome mums apie tai pranešti.

Polish

Jeżeli chcieliby Państwo otrzymać te informacje w innej postaci, na przykład w wersji łatwej do czytania lub w innym języku, prosimy powiedzieć nam o tym.

Prosimy poinformować nas również, jeżeli potrzebowałiby Państwo usługi tłumaczenia ustnego lub innej pomocy.

Punjabi

ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪ ਵਿਚ, ਜਿਵੇਂ ਪੜ੍ਹਨ ਵਿਚ ਆਸਾਨ ਰੂਪ ਜਾਂ ਕਿਸੇ ਦੂਜੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ, ਚਾਹੀਦੀ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਦੱਸੋ।

ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਦੁਭਾਸ਼ੀਏ ਦੀ ਜਾਂ ਸਹਾਇਤਾ ਦੀ ਲੋੜ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਦੱਸੋ।

Romanian

Dacă aveți nevoie de informații în alt format, ca de exemplu caractere ușor de citit sau altă limbă, vă rugăm să ne informați.

Dacă aveți nevoie de un interpret sau de asistență, vă rugăm să ne informați.

Traditional Chinese

如果您需要以其他方式了解信息，如易读或其他语种，请告诉我们。

如果您需要口译人员或帮助，请告诉我们。