

KNEE ARTHRITIS (OSTEOARTHRITIS)

WHAT IS IT?

Osteoarthritis is an inflammatory process which affects the joints in the body. The surfaces of the joint have become worn. All normal joints and joint tissues are constantly undergoing some form of repair because of the wear and repair 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 Osteoarthritis develops.

WHAT CAN I DO?

EXERCISES

Keep yourself active; joints do not wear out with normal use. It is better to use them than not to use them. It is important to get a good balance between too much activity and too much rest. Most Osteoarthritis patients find that sitting too long will cause their joints to stiffen up.

The quadriceps muscles (Quads) are the muscle at the front of the thigh: they may become weaker if you have osteoarthritis of the knee. This is because the nerve supply to the muscle is reduced or slowed down due to pain. To overcome this we recommend that you exercise the muscle regularly. Studies show that regular exercise and strengthening of the muscle will not only improve your mobility but also reduce your pain.

The following exercises are a good starting point, are easy to perform at home and require no equipment. We recommend you perform between 10 and 15 repetitions of each exercise and perform 3 to 4 sets per day. This is of course a rough guide to start with then you can lower or higher repetitions depending on how you feel.

STATIC QUADS

Sit on top of a bed/sofa or on the floor With your affected leg straight out, gently tense the muscles at the front of your thigh and push the back of your knee downwards into the bed. Hold for 3 to 5 seconds.

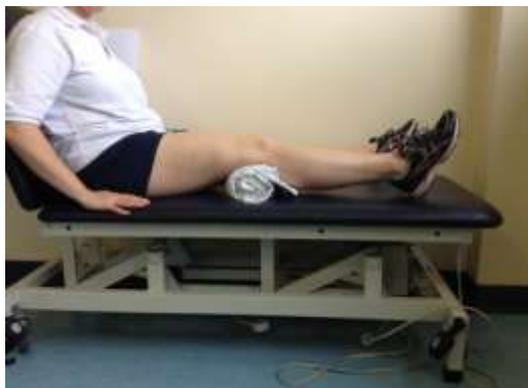


<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p7bQMTCAhUI>

INNER RANGE QUADS

Starting in the same position as above. Except this time place a rolled up towel or pillow under your knee. Again tense the quads muscles and lift your lower leg up in the air until it is as straight as possible. Hold for 3 to 5 seconds.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vA78D3WAeyQ>



STRAIGHT LEG RAISE

Start with performing the same static quad contraction you performed in the first exercise. But instead of holding it there you should lift the straight leg up in the air a few inches. Making sure you keep your knee as straight as possible. Again hold for 3 to 5 seconds.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=68uVN8s-Js0>



SIT TO STAND

Sit comfortably in a chair. Gently lean forward so your weight is over your feet. Try not to use your arms to help, keep them folded in front of you unless you have balance issues. Then smoothly as possible push up through your heels and straighten your hips and knees to stand. Make this easier by performing the exercise from a high surface. You can also make it harder by using a lower surface if you wish.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dg20pIkkzh8>



REMEMBER;

- To work within your limits exercises should not cause muscle strain or excessive fatigue.
- Feeling an ache after exercise is good and it shows the muscles are working.
- Try to pace yourself with your exercises a little bit but often is the ideal way to exercise.
- The exercises are not designed to make you worse. If it does, reduce the number of repetitions, or stop for a day or two.
- Weight is important. Any extra weight you carry will put more pressure on the affected joints. Therefore we would recommend losing weight were possible.

TIPS

- Using a hot water bottle or a specially designed microwavable hot pack can help to reduce pain and stiffness. Using heat will not change the long term prognosis of the condition but it may provide you with some short term relief.
- Try to avoid prolonged positions for example sitting for a long time with your knee's bent.
- Wear shoes with a cushioned sole as much as possible to act as a shock absorber.
- Keep as active as possible but remember to rest it if it becomes painful and start again later.
- If the pain is affecting your mobility you may find it beneficial to use a stick to keep yourself mobile.
- When using stairs, use the hand rail.
- Remember the rule good leg first when your going up the stairs, bad leg first when you're stepping down the stairs.

This leaflet is available in larger print and other formats please contact physiotherapy department on the address below.

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