



INFORMATION FOR PATIENTS

Knee and hip osteoarthritis

This four-week, eight session course is designed to support people living with knee and hip osteoarthritis. Throughout the program, you'll gain a deeper understanding of your condition and learn practical strategies to manage it through education, exercise, and self-management techniques.

This leaflet contains the key take-away messages from each session along with some additional links and resources to continue to support you on completion of the programme. Whether you're new to managing osteoarthritis or looking to build on what you already know, we hope this program helps you feel more confident, active, and in control of your health.



This programme is designed to empower you with the knowledge and skills to better understand and manage hip and knee osteoarthritis (OA). Across eight interactive sessions, you will learn practical tools to reduce pain, improve movement, enhance your overall quality of life, and put you in control of your condition.

By the end of the course, you will be able to:

Understand osteoarthritis including what it is, how it affects joints, and what can be done to manage it effectively.

Learn strategies to manage symptoms confidently, enabling you to take part in daily activities with less fear of pain or discomfort.

Appreciate the benefits of regular, gentle exercise and gain the motivation to stay active in a way that supports your joints.

Develop personal goals and action plans, helping you to stay on track and continue making progress beyond the programme.

Build confidence in self-managing OA, with techniques that include pacing, activity planning, and symptom monitoring.

What is osteoarthritis?

Here is a short video from Arthritis UK explaining what osteoarthritis is (type the link into your browser): <https://youtu.be/Do-s0LXmwn4?feature=shared>

Main symptoms of osteoarthritis

Pain

Stiffness

Swelling

Reduced
movement

Joint crepitus

Pain is the most common symptom of OA, but it may feel different for each person depending on which joint is affected. Often pain may feel worse with activity and improves with rest.

Hip OA pain	Knee OA pain
Often felt in the groin, outer hip, or buttock.	Depends on where the arthritis is in the joint, but pain is mainly localised in and around the knee.
May radiate down the thigh.	Commonly felt on the inside of the knee, or behind the knee.
Some people experience knee pain, even though the issue starts in the hip this is called referred pain.	Difficulty with activities that require bending the knee, such as walking up or down hills or stairs.
Difficulty with movements involving hip flexion and rotation such as putting on your shoes and socks, getting in and out of a car or standing from a chair.	Instability, or the feeling that the knee will 'give way' or buckle, is frequently reported. The knee may also lock or feel stuck.
Both in hip and knee OA pain:	
- It typically feels like a deep ache and can be worse during or after activity, or at the end of the day.	
- The joint may feel tender when light pressure is applied to or near the area.	
- Both conditions involve pain that is aggravated by use. The weight-bearing nature of walking, running, and standing can increase pain in either joint.	
- The pain and other symptoms of OA typically develop slowly over time and worsen as the condition progresses	

Stiffness and restricted movement

You may feel stiff after resting, especially in the morning or after sitting for a while.
Movements like bending, twisting, or getting in/out of a car can become harder.
Tying shoelaces or putting on socks may become difficult due to hip stiffness.

Grating or cracking sounds (crepitus)

You might notice your joint makes cracking, popping, or grinding sounds when you move it.

This happens because the joint is no longer moving as smoothly as it used to.

Giving way or loss of confidence

Some people feel their joint may 'give way' or feel unstable. This is often due to:

- Muscle weakness.
- Changes in joint structure.
- Altered nerve signals affecting how the muscles respond.

Swelling

Swelling is more common in the knee joint.
It can happen due to inflammation or fluid buildup as the body reacts to changes in the joint.
The area may feel puffy, warm, or stiff.

Top tips

Stay active

Gentle, regular exercise helps keep your joints flexible and muscles strong. Walking, swimming, or cycling are great low-impact options.

Maintain a healthy weight

Losing even a small amount of weight can reduce pressure on your hips and knees and ease symptoms.

Use your body well

Use good posture and body mechanics when lifting, bending, or doing repetitive tasks to avoid unnecessary strain.

Avoid long periods of sitting

Take breaks to move around and stretch to reduce stiffness.

Manage past injuries

Follow up on any joint injuries with your healthcare provider to prevent worsening symptoms.

Eat a balanced diet

A nutritious diet supports overall joint and bone health.

Talk to your healthcare team

They can help you create a personalised plan that suits your needs and lifestyle.

Goal setting

SMART goal setting	
Specific	What exactly do you want to do? (e.g., walk for 10 minutes each day).
Measurable	How will you track your progress? (e.g., keep a log or use a step counter).
Achievable	Is this realistic for you right now? (e.g., start small and build up).
Relevant	Does this support your overall health goals? (e.g., reduce joint pain, stay active).
Time-bound	When will you check your progress or complete this goal? (e.g., review after two weeks).

View the following video on goal setting:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LBpwDEF93pg>



Why do we use goal setting?

- Stay focused and organised.
- Maintain motivation.
- Track progress over time.
- Break larger challenges into manageable steps.
- Improve our chances of success by working toward something clear and achievable.



How can goal setting benefit me?

- Help you stay motivated.
- Give you a sense of purpose and direction.
- Allow you to see how far you've come.
- Build confidence as you achieve small wins.
- Encourage consistent habits and actions.



Why do we need to set goals?

- Stay committed to making progress.
- Overcome obstacles with a clear plan.
- Remain accountable for our actions.
- Create structure and routine in our lives.

Pacing

This is managing your physical activity, so you don't get tired too quickly. View the following links for further advice:

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7cGG9y9fAKg>https://aci.health.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/624721/Pacing-guide.pdf<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=175HXmZZyU>

Pain and management strategies

Option	What it does	Examples	When to use/notes
Paracetamol	Eases pain.	Panadol, Calpol.	Can help mild pain. Take regularly (not just as needed) for the best effect. Safe for most people if taken correctly.
Topical anti-inflammatory gels	Reduce pain and inflammation on the skin over the joint.	Ibuleve, Voltarol, Voltaren.	Useful for knee or hand OA. Fewer side effects than tablets. May be used long term.
Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory tablets	Reduce inflammation and pain.	Ibuprofen, Naproxen, Diclofenac.	Use the lowest dose for the shortest time. Take with food. Check with your GP first as these may not suit people with stomach, heart, or kidney issues.
Capsaicin cream	Blocks pain signals to the brain.	Available on prescription.	Useful for knee or hand OA. Apply several times daily for four to six weeks to feel the benefit.
Opioids (strong painkillers)	Block pain signals in the brain.	Co-codamol (codeine and paracetamol), Tramadol.	Only for short-term or severe pain. Can cause drowsiness, nausea, or constipation and a risk of dependence. Always review with your GP.
Steroid injections	Reduce inflammation directly in the joint.	Corticosteroid injections.	Helpful for short-term relief during a flare-up. Usually limited to a few times per year.
TENS / acupuncture / other	Stimulate nerves or natural pain relief chemicals.	TENS machine, acupuncture.	Can offer short-term relief for some people. Safe to try alongside other treatments.

Treatment	What it does	What the evidence says	What to watch out for
Heat (warm packs, baths, hot water bottle)	Eases stiffness and relaxes muscles.	Apply for 15–20 minutes before activity or in the morning	Protect skin with a towel; avoid very hot temperatures.
Cold (ice packs, frozen peas)	Reduces swelling and soothes sharp pain.	Apply for 10–15 minutes, several times a day	Wrap in a damp towel; avoid if you have poor circulation or numbness.
TENS machine	Sends gentle electrical pulses through the skin to help distract the brain from pain signals.	Can help reduce pain for some people, especially short term; safe to use and widely available.	Avoid if you have a pacemaker or epilepsy without medical advice; skin irritation can occur if pads are not used properly.
Acupuncture	Thin needles stimulate nerves to release natural painkillers called endorphins.	Some people get short-term pain relief; evidence is mixed but this is generally safe when done by trained professionals.	Only use qualified practitioners; risks of mild bruising, soreness, or infection if this is not done properly.
Foot orthotics /insoles	Supports the foot and knee alignment to reduce strain.	Can improve comfort and walking for some people with OA.	Poorly fitted insoles can cause discomfort or worsen pain; get professional fitting or advice.
Anti-inflammatory diet	Eating more fruits, vegetables, whole grains, oily fish, and healthy fats to reduce inflammation.	Supports joint and overall health; helps reduce inflammation.	Watch for allergies (e.g., fish); avoid fad diets; ensure balanced nutrition; discuss with your GP if you are on special medications.

View the following links for further advice:

- Understanding pain – <https://www.flippinpain.co.uk/>
- Managing arthritis pain – https://www.arthritis-uk.org/information-and-support/understanding-arthritis/managing-arthritis-symptoms/managing-arthritis-pain/?_gl=1*1yxmxgs*_up*MQ..*_gs*MQ..&gclid=CjwKCAjwidXQBhAZEiwA4egw6PLvt_CUx1aICxK_su9XrEKta3XMP9HhnJ2sgvIAXf3HKALgK6nRORoCXDEQAvD_BwE
- Live well with pain – <https://livewellwithpain.co.uk/>
- Rethinking persistent pain – <https://www.tamethebeast.org/>

Free resources for weight management and nutrition

- NHS digital weight management programme – <https://www.england.nhs.uk/digital-weight-management/>
- Free local weight loss service – access community-based programs and support – yourhealthnotts.co.uk/weight-loss
- Practical tips and tools for healthy weight loss – <https://www.nhs.uk/better-health/lose-weight/>
- Comprehensive guidance to help you manage your weight - <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-weight/managing-your-weight/tips-to-help-you-lose-weight/>
- Advice on healthy eating and diet - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8dP9-LZGBaI>

- Additional support for a healthier lifestyle – <https://yourhealthnotts.co.uk/sign-up/>
- Eatwell guide – <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/food-guidelines-and-food-labels/the-eatwell-guide/>
- Osteoarthritis and diet – <https://www.bda.uk.com/resource/osteoarthritis-diet.html>

Supplements

Some supplements may support joint health, but they are **not licensed OA treatments** in the UK. Always speak to your GP before starting any, especially if you take other medications.

Important:

- Supplements **aren't a replacement** for exercise, weight management, or medications prescribed by your doctor.
- Always **talk to your GP or pharmacist** before starting supplements, especially if you take other medicines. If you try a supplement, give it at least **three months** to see if it helps, and stop if it doesn't.

Supplement	What it is and how it might work	What the evidence says	What to watch out for
Glucosamine and chondroitin	Natural building blocks found in cartilage; thought to support joint health.	Mixed evidence; some people may notice mild pain relief, but the overall benefit is small or uncertain.	May cause mild stomach upset; avoid if allergic to shellfish. Stop if no improvement after three months.
Green lipped mussel	A shellfish extract rich in omega-3s and anti-inflammatory compounds.	Limited evidence; some people find it helps alongside other treatments.	Avoid if you take blood thinners (risk of bleeding); allergic reactions possible.
Fish oil (Omega-3)	Contains omega-3 fatty acids that may reduce inflammation.	Evidence for OA pain relief is limited; good for overall heart and joint health.	High doses may increase bleeding risk; talk to your doctor before starting.
Turmeric / curcumin	Natural compound with anti-inflammatory properties.	Small studies suggest it might reduce pain and improve function.	Choose quality, standardised products; may interact with blood thinners or other medications; check with your GP.

Flare up and long-term management

Step	What to do	Why it helps
1. Active rest	Avoid unnecessary activity for one to two days - not total rest.	Prevents stiffness while allowing recovery.
2. Heat or Ice	Heat for stiffness; ice for swelling or inflammation.	Reduces pain and joint irritation.
3. Review medications	Adjust simple pain relief for two to three days if safe and advised.	Keeps pain under control.
4. Gentle movement	Keep the joint moving with light, pain-free exercises.	Maintains flexibility and confidence.
5. Relaxation	Use breathing or mindfulness techniques.	Lowers muscle tension and pain sensitivity.
6. Gradual return	Slowly increase back to normal routine.	Prevents overloading after a flare.

View the following video on flare management:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5FPHBwa9Ci0>

Myth busting

Myth	Reality
Exercise makes OA worse	Gentle, regular movement helps reduce pain, improve joint function, and keep muscles strong. Avoiding activity often makes symptoms worse over time.
Running causes knee OA	Recreational running is safe and may even help protect joints. It improves muscle strength, joint lubrication, and cartilage health. Only high-level, intense training over years may carry increased risk.
Nothing can help except surgery	Many people manage OA well with physiotherapy, exercise, weight management, and lifestyle changes, often delaying or avoiding the need for surgery altogether.
Cracking your knuckles causes arthritis	There is no scientific evidence that knuckle cracking causes OA or harms your joints.
Cold or rainy weather causes joint pain	Weather may affect how your joints feel, but there is no strong link between weather and joint damage. Reduced movement in colder months may increase stiffness.

Everyone with OA will need joint surgery	Surgery is not something that will always happen. Many people see long-term improvements through non-surgical treatments like exercise and physiotherapy.
You need an X-ray to diagnose OA	Most OA diagnoses are made by a healthcare professional based on your symptoms and joint movement. Scans often do not match the level of pain or function and are not always necessary.
OA only affects older people	OA is more common with age, but younger adults can develop it too, especially after injury or with certain joint conditions.
OA is just 'wear and tear'	OA is a complex condition involving low-grade inflammation and the body's ability to repair joint tissue, not just simple use over time.
There is nothing you can do to control OA	While it cannot be cured, OA can be managed very effectively. Exercise, weight management, and staying active can reduce pain and help you stay independent.
Foods, supplements, or copper bracelets can cure OA	No food or supplements have been proven to cure OA. A balanced diet is important for overall health, but there is no quick fix.
Cracking or clicking means it is 'bone on bone'	Joint sounds like clicking or cracking are common and not always a sign of damage. Even when cartilage is reduced, movement and exercise can still help.

Additional resources

World Health Organisation guidelines on physical activity	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wMziUVokjcw
NHS Online library of strength and aerobic exercises	https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/
Searchable list of activities, groups and classes local to you	https://www.yournottsdirectory.org.uk/

Discounted gym referral schemes	- Everyone Active - https://www.everyoneactive.com/content-hub/health/exercise-referral/ - Active4Today - https://www.active4today.co.uk/memberships/adultmemberships/ - Healthy Life - https://www.moreleisure.com/mansfield/healthy-life/
Advice and guidance on becoming more active	https://www.nhs.uk/better-health/
Walking groups in Nottinghamshire	https://walknotts.org.uk/support-walking/
South Forest arthritis self-help group	All session booked by phoning South Forest on 01623 83866. Seated exercise: - Mondays, 11am. Aqua sessions: - Tuesdays - 12pm to 1pm. - Thursdays - 9am to 10am and 10.15am to 11.15am. Aqua sessions during school holiday (times may vary): - Tuesday – 9am to 10am. - Thursday – 9am to 10am. Price: £4 for a member; £5 for a non- member.
Chair-based Pilates	https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/pilates-and-yoga/chair-based-pilates-exercise-video/
Pilates workout (YouTube)	- Pilates at home - https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLfGjoNHQI4cBQ8UN_h_p4vmoV5gPMFHCT - Matwork Pilates - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IJJ6eljMWGY
Your Health Notts	Advice on smoking cessation, weight management, alcohol advice and falls prevention - https://yourhealthnotts.co.uk/sign-up/
Tracking diet, food and weight	NHS food scanner app This free app allows you to scan the barcode of a food item to see its nutritional content and discover healthier alternatives. It provides traffic light labels (green, amber, red) for sugar, fat, and salt content, and even offers an augmented reality feature to visualize these nutrients. It's a great tool for making informed choices during your grocery shopping. IOS - https://apps.apple.com/gb/app/nhs-food-scanner/id1182946415

	Android - https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.phe.c4lfoodsmart
Hot and cold therapy for pain	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YObIOqCe8j0
BeeFree video on managing pain and mood	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I-Vbd8auKL8
Talking therapies	https://notts-talk.co.uk/
NHS advice on daily mood management	https://www.nhs.uk/every-mind-matters/
NHS mood and mental health support	https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/
Samaritans	https://www.samaritans.org/how-we-can-help/contact-samaritan/?utm_source=google&utm_medium=organic&utm_campaign=onebox Call 116 123 – 24 hours a day.
Headspace	Resources on mindfulness, meditation, mental health coaching and sleep - https://www.headspace.com/
Improving sleep	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nysjq8VlwI8
NHS tips on improving sleep	https://www.nhs.uk/every-mind-matters/mental-wellbeing-tips/how-to-fall-asleep-faster-and-sleep-better/
MSK self-referral	https://www.sfh-tr.nhs.uk/services/msk-together-partnership/our-services/physiotherapy-and-self-referral
Standguide referral (return to work support)	https://www.standguide.co.uk/index.php/working-well-east-midlands/ Self referral: Contact number - 01618814826, option 5 Textphone - 18001 01618814826 If you are deaf or hard of hearing you can download the 'Relay UK app' in mobile device. For more information go to https://www.relayuk.bt.com/ Enquiries email: workingwellem@standguide.co.uk

Access to work/ support for workplace adjustments (UK Government)	https://www.gov.uk/access-to-work
NHS safe driving and mobility advice	• https://www.nhs.uk/social-care-and-support/care-services-equipment-and-care-homes/driving-and-using-public-transport/ • https://www.gov.uk/browse/driving/disability-health-condition
MSK Together website	https://www.sfh-tr.nhs.uk/services/msk-together-partnership/ Our website with information about our service, what to expect at your appointment and information about MSK conditions.
Arthritis UK	https://www.arthritis-uk.org/ Information on different conditions and you can link with local support groups.
Flippin Pain	https://www.flippinpain.co.uk A great resource for understanding pain and the things you can do to reach your goals.
Escape Pain	https://escape-pain.org/
Shared decision- making tools for joint replacement surgery	• https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/making-a-decision-about-knee-osteoarthritis-v1.pdf.pdf • https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Making-a-decision-about-hip-osteoarthritis.pdf

Further sources of information

NHS Choices: www.nhs.uk/conditions

Our website: www.sfh-tr.nhs.uk

Patient Experience Team (PET)

PET is available to help with any of your compliments, concerns or complaints, and will ensure a prompt and efficient service.

King's Mill Hospital: 01623 672222

Newark Hospital: 01636 685692

Email: sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net

If you would like this information in an alternative format, for example large print or easy read, or if you need help with communicating with us, for example because you use British Sign Language, please let us know. You can call the Patient Experience Team on 01623 672222 or email sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net.

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