PromoteHealth
Physiotherapy & Performance

A confident, informed return to movement and sport

Osteoarthritis: keeping joints moving

For knees, hips, shoulders and other joints. Osteoarthritis can cause pain, stiffness and reduced movement. This guide covers osteoarthritis; inflammatory arthritis needs different care.

YOUR JOINT HEALTH PLAN

01	KEEP MOVING **Ease stiffness**	Move your joints regularly through a comfortable range. Break up long periods of sitting and choose activities that help you keep doing what matters to you.
02	BUILD STRENGTH **Support your joints**	Work with your physiotherapist on strengthening the muscles around affected joints. Start at a manageable level and build up gradually. Regular practice can improve pain and function.
03	BUILD FITNESS **Find your activity**	Try walking, cycling, swimming or another activity you enjoy and can manage. Adapt the type and amount to your joints, fitness and goals.
04	MANAGE FLARE-UPS **Adjust, then rebuild**	Some discomfort can occur when starting exercise. If symptoms flare, reduce the amount temporarily and keep gentle movement going. Ask for advice if pain or swelling is worsening.

SUPPORT YOUR JOINTS

If you are living with excess weight, supported weight loss can reduce pain and improve function, especially for knees and hips. Walking aids or practical adaptations may make daily tasks easier.

WHAT ABOUT PAIN RELIEF?

Ask a pharmacist or GP about suitable pain relief. Anti-inflammatory gels may help, especially for knees. Tablets need a safety review. Use medicines to support exercise and activity.

WHEN TO GET MEDICAL HELP

Go to A&E or call 999: severe joint pain after an injury, a joint out of place, inability to walk or bear weight, or new loss of feeling after an injury.

Urgent GP / NHS 111: a hot, swollen joint, or joint pain with fever, shivering or feeling generally unwell. Do not assume this is an arthritis flare.

Arrange a review: symptoms affecting sleep or daily life, worsening swelling, or morning stiffness lasting over 30 minutes. Scans are not usually needed to diagnose osteoarthritis. If treatment is not helping and quality of life is substantially affected, discuss further options, including joint replacement where appropriate.

INFORMED BY: NICE NG226 • NHS: Osteoarthritis; Joint pain

Disclaimer: For general information only; not a replacement for professional medical advice or an individual rehabilitation plan.

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