

Knee osteoarthritis: self-management options

Use this **Option Grid™** decision aid to help you and your healthcare professional decide how to help you manage the pain that is related to wear and tear in your knee joint (osteoarthritis) and the nearby ligaments and muscles.

Frequently Asked Questions ↓	Lifestyle and weight loss	Medication
What would I have to do?	Losing weight, being active or making changes to your activities may reduce knee pain to some extent. Choose an exercise where you build up strength, e.g. stand and walk, building it up slowly. Make sure you see a physical therapist.	Take medication regularly when you are in pain - and try and find the right medication (or combination of medication) for you. If exercise brings on pain, take pain relievers before you start. Taking pain relievers may help you exercise more, and in the long run, experience less pain.
What are the benefits?	If you become more physically active you are likely to experience less pain and better movement in your knee. Improved sense of well-being. You may also: meet people with similar conditions; improve your social life; do more in everyday life.	Reducing your pain will help you be active and may help you sleep better.
What are the drawbacks?	Exercise has shown to be safe for people with knee osteoarthritis. Although exercise may initially be uncomfortable, taking pain relievers before exercising can help this. Keeping going with an exercise plan can sometimes be tough-going and joining a group makes it more likely that you'll stick with it.	Side effects are rare with over the counter pain relievers when taken at the right dose. Ask your pharmacist, doctor, or physical therapist for more information.
Will my weight affect my pain?	Yes, being overweight makes knee pain worse. Increasing exercise will help you lose weight and will reduce your pain.	Being overweight leads to more stress and damage to knee and hip joints. Losing weight and building up the strength of the joint may reduce pain.
What other things can help?	There are often a lot of things available locally, for example walking groups, yoga or Pilates; exercise classes for people with joint problems; or swimming pools and gyms.	Over the counter pain relievers and gels are widely used. Your pharmacist will be able to advise you.
What else can I do?	You can get further information from patient groups. In the US try: http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/osteoarthritis.html	Talk to your healthcare provider about the other treatment options available to you and make sure you see a physical therapist if you want to learn more about how best to strengthen the knee joint.

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