

Osteoarthritis in over 16s: diagnosis and management

Information for the public

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Osteoarthritis: the care you should expect

Osteoarthritis is a condition that affects the joints. It is the most common type of arthritis and is most often seen in older people.

Osteoarthritis causes pain, stiffness and problems moving the joint. It commonly affects the hips, knees, hands and feet, but it can affect other joints. It can also affect more than one joint.

Symptoms of osteoarthritis may be mild, or more severe and affect everyday life. Symptoms can vary between joints and over time, and do not always get worse. Sometimes they flare up and settle back down again.

We want this guideline to make a difference by making sure that:

- people with osteoarthritis are given the information and support they need to manage their condition
- people with osteoarthritis understand that weight management and regular therapeutic exercise will improve their quality of life and reduce pain
- if needed, people with osteoarthritis are offered the most suitable painkillers
- more people who need joint replacement are referred for surgery.

Making a decision about knee osteoarthritis

NICE has produced a [decision support tool: making a decision about knee osteoarthritis](#) on behalf of NHS England. It is available on the NHS England website.

This decision support tool is to help with decisions about knee osteoarthritis. It includes information about the condition and possible treatments.

Making decisions together

Decisions about treatment and care are best when they are made together. Your health and care professionals should give you relevant information in a way that is clear and understandable to you, talk with you about your options and listen carefully to your views and concerns.

To help you make decisions, think about:

- What matters most to you – what do you want to get out of any care?
- What are you most worried about – are there risks or downsides to the care that worry you more than others?
- How will the treatment affect your day-to-day life?
- What happens if you do not want to have treatment?

If you need more help and support to understand the information you are given, tell your health and care professional.

Read more about [making decisions about your care](#).

Where can I find out more?

The [NHS website](#) has more information about osteoarthritis.

The organisations below can give you more advice and support.

- [Versus Arthritis](#), 0800 5200 520
- [Pain Concern](#), 0300 1230 789
- [Age UK](#), 0800 678 1602

To share an experience of care you have received, contact your local [Healthwatch](#).

NICE is not responsible for the content of these websites.

We wrote this guideline with people who have been affected by osteoarthritis and professionals who treat and support them. All the decisions are based on the best research available.

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