



Healthy Joint Group: Exercise

The Healthy Joint Programme is for patients with joint problems caused by osteoarthritis (OA). The group sessions offer expert advice to help you manage your symptoms and live well. This leaflet outlines the benefits and current recommendations of exercise and relaxation techniques.

If you have any questions, please speak to your physiotherapist, who will be happy to help.

What are the benefits of exercise?

Physical benefits:

- Improved strength
- Improved flexibility
- Weight control
- Improved fitness
- Improved balance
- Improved function
- Help to reduce high blood pressure and maintain a healthy level
- Reduced disease risk

Social benefits:

- Meet people
- Independence
- Fun

Psychological benefits:

- Improved mood
- Improved confidence
- Improved sleep
- Improved thinking

Exercise recommendations

The Department of Health guidelines recommend at least 150 minutes of **moderate intensity** exercise a week. Moderate exercise could be brisk walking, cycling or swimming.

- This can be broken down into smaller chunks e.g. 30 minutes a day, 5 times a week. This can be in smaller time sessions or all in one go.
- It is recommended that muscle strengthening exercises are performed at least 2 or more times a week.

- You should feel slightly warmer with a slightly increased heart rate but should still be able to talk after exercising.
- You can do any activity that you enjoy doing. You may want to incorporate it into part of your daily activities.

Alternatively, the Department of Health recommend 75 minutes of **vigorous intensity** aerobic activity, e.g. running or singles tennis match every week and muscle strengthening exercises on two or more days a week. You need to make sure you are fit enough and well enough to do this. An equivalent mix of moderate and vigorous activity can be done.



Exercises

You will be able to choose from a number of exercises during the sessions.

The exercises will be split into

- General exercises
- Specific exercises for the hip or knee, although you may benefit from doing exercises for both areas as the hip and knee are closely linked.

The exercises are designed to increase:

- Strength
- Flexibility
- Endurance
- Balance and coordination.

The aim is to gradually build up to performing each exercise for a maximum of 2 minutes. There is no rush to achieve the 2 minutes.

You should start with low repetitions and resistance until you are used to the exercises and feel you are able to do more.

You may feel some discomfort when doing a new activity / exercise, especially if you have not exercised for a long time. This does not mean that you have damaged yourself. You may experience some delayed onset muscle soreness a day or two after exercising that may last a few days. This is normal.

If this pain is different from your normal pain please discuss this with your physiotherapist.

Relaxation techniques

When we are stressed we may feel:

- Irritable, angry, impatient or wound up
- Over-burdened or overwhelmed
- Anxious, nervous or afraid
- Like your thoughts are racing and you can't switch off
- Unable to enjoy yourself
- Depressed
- Uninterested in life
- Like you've lost your sense of humour

The following techniques may help with relaxation:

- Visualisations – think of a photograph, picture or place where you were feeling relaxed. Think about how you felt there
- Breathing exercises
- Audio recordings or DVDs
- Apps.

Progressive muscle relaxation exercise

- Take a long slow deep breath in through your nose
- Hold your breath for a moment, then breathe out through your mouth
- Take another slow breath in through your nose. Fill your lungs completely. Hold it for a moment... and release the breath through your mouth.

Throughout the session you will tense various muscles throughout your body. This should not be vigorous; just tighten each muscle firmly but gently as you breathe in. If you feel uncomfortable at any time, you can simply relax and breathe normally.

When you're relaxed and ready to start, shift your attention to your feet. Take a moment to focus on how they feel.

- Breathe in through your nose, slowly, deeply, and then out through your mouth
- Slowly tense the muscles in your feet and calves, squeezing as tightly as you can. Hold for a count of 10 and relax
- Slowly tense the muscles in your buttocks, squeezing as tightly as you can. Hold for a count of 10...and relax
- Slowly tense the muscles in your tummy, squeezing as tightly as you can. Hold for a count of 10...and relax
- Slowly tense the muscles in your back, squeezing as tightly as you can. Hold for a count of 10...and relax
- Slowly make a fist, squeezing as tightly as you can. Hold for a count of 10...and relax.
- Slowly tense the muscles in your shoulders, lifting toward your ears, squeezing as tightly as you can. Hold for a count of 10...and relax
- Slowly tense the muscles in your face, squeezing as tightly as you can. Hold for a count of 10...and relax.

Feel the heaviness in your body as you feel completely relaxed.

Contacting Physiotherapy

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To find out more about our Trust visit www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.

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