

# Osteoarthritis of the hip

## Information and advice

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This information is designed to supplement the advice given by your doctor, and is written by physiotherapists based on the latest medical advice.

Osteoarthritis is an extension of the body's repair process, which takes place in joints which are stressed or injured. Sometimes, but not always, it can cause pain and stiffness. This condition does not follow the same course in everybody but there are certain things you can do to help yourself and minimise problems occurring in the future:

- Osteoarthritis tends to affect weight bearing joints, and being overweight can lead to increasing stress on the joints and increased pain. If you are overweight, then losing weight can help.
- Avoid, where possible, carrying heavy loads. Balance loads between both hands and decrease the loads by increasing the number of journeys.
- Avoid sitting for prolonged periods of time as this can cause stiffness. Try to get up and walk around or alter your position regularly, at least every 20 to 30 minutes.
- Remain active as this helps keep your joints healthy. It will also help with weight loss:
  - Swimming – be cautious with breaststroke due to the twisting action.
  - Cycling – it is important to have the saddle correctly adjusted (not too low) and avoid lots of hills.
- Heat may be helpful to release muscle tension and pain. You could use a wheat pack or a hot water bottle (make sure it has a cover). Do not use heat if you have impaired circulation or skin sensation.
- Your GP may be able to offer help in the form of painkillers (analgesics) and/or anti-inflammatory medication that will help to alleviate the symptoms and allow you to become more active.

### Exercises

Exercise can be very helpful in keeping the muscles as strong as possible and helping to support the joint. You may find the following exercises useful. Ideally they should be performed twice a day.

#### Bridging

Lay on your bed, with your knees bent. Clench your buttocks and lift your bottom a few inches off the bed. Hold for five seconds, breathing normally then slowly relax back down.

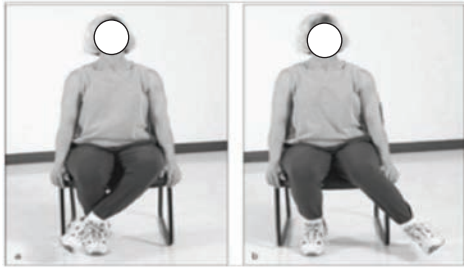
Repeat five to 10 times, twice daily.



#### Sitting hip flexion

Sit comfortably on a firm chair. Slowly lift your knee towards your chest as far as comfortably possible, then slowly lower. Repeat the exercise with the left leg.





### Sitting hip rotation

While sitting in a chair with your knees bent, slide your left foot back so the right leg can move to the left without interference. Swing your lower right leg like a pendulum, from side to side, with the knee and thigh acting as the axis of rotation (see picture). Repeat this movement with the left leg.



### Sideways lift

Holding onto the back of a chair, slowly lift your leg out sideways, keeping your body in the middle (avoid leaning to the other side). Hold for five seconds then slowly lower the leg back to the middle.

Repeat five to 10 times on each leg, twice daily.



### Sit to stand

Sit with your arms crossed, or out in front of you. Slowly lean forward and stand up. Then slowly sit down. You may need to use your arms to help at first. Try not to drop into the chair. The lower the chair, the more difficult the exercise.

Repeat five to 10 times, twice daily.



### Balance exercises

Practise standing on one leg whilst holding onto the back of a chair. Clench the muscles in your buttocks as you stand there. If this is too easy, try to let go of the chair and just hover your hands above the chair so you can grab hold if you need to. When your leg gets tired, swap legs.

Repeat two to three times on each leg, twice daily.



### Hip stretch

Holding onto a wall or chair, bend your knee and hold your foot, as in the picture. (If you can't reach to hold the foot you may need to loop a towel around the ankle and hold that instead). Hold for 30 seconds to give the tight muscles a good opportunity to stretch, then slowly release. Swap legs and repeat on the other leg.

Repeat two times on each leg, twice daily

**If you feel the exercises are making your pain worse, reduce the number or frequency of the exercises or stop and seek advice.**

The following link may help:

<http://sdm.rightcare.nhs.uk/pda/osteoarthritis-of-the-hip/>



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