



Exercise programme for hip arthritis

Strengthening, movement and activity for hip osteoarthritis

Exercise is one of the most effective treatments for hip osteoarthritis, and NICE recommends it for everyone with the condition. Strengthening the muscles around the hip and keeping it moving can ease pain and stiffness and help you stay active.

At a glance

How often	Strengthening exercises 3-4 times a week, gentle movement daily
How much activity	Build towards 150 minutes of moderate activity a week, such as walking, cycling or swimming
Is some pain OK?	Yes. Mild to moderate discomfort during exercise is acceptable if it settles by the next day
How long until it helps	Most people notice improvement after 6-12 weeks of regular exercise
Weight	If you are overweight, losing even a small amount of weight reduces the load on your hips

Using pain as a guide

- Some discomfort while exercising is normal and does not mean you are damaging the joint.
- Aim to keep pain at a level you find acceptable, roughly 5 out of 10 or less, and settling by the next morning.
- If pain is worse the next day, do fewer repetitions or an easier version, then build up again.

Building up

- Start with 1-2 sets of 8-10 repetitions of each exercise.
- When it feels easy, increase to 3 sets, then add more challenge, for example a lower chair or a resistance band.
- Warm up with a few minutes of gentle walking or cycling.

Your exercises

Sit to stand

From a firm chair, stand up without using your hands if you can, then sit down slowly.

Side-lying leg lift

Lying on your side with the lower knee bent, lift the top leg upwards, keeping it straight and in line with your body. Lower slowly.

Bridging

Lying on your back with knees bent, squeeze your buttocks and lift your hips. Hold 5 seconds and lower.

Clam

Lying on your side with knees bent and feet together, lift the top knee while keeping your feet touching. Lower slowly.

Standing hip exercises

Holding a support: take the leg out to the side, then backwards, keeping your body upright.

Hip stretch

Lying on your back, hug one knee gently towards your chest while keeping the other leg flat. Hold 20-30 seconds.

Mini squats

Holding a firm support, bend your knees slightly as if to sit, then straighten.

Balance

Holding a support, stand on one leg for up to 30 seconds. Progress by letting go when you feel safe.

Staying active

- Walking, cycling, swimming and aqua exercise are all good for hip arthritis.
- A walking stick in the hand opposite the painful hip can reduce the load on the joint.
- Group programmes such as ESCAPE-pain, often available locally, combine exercise and education.

Sources. This guide is based on Mr Umar's practice and is guided by NICE and British Orthopaedic Association (BOA) guidance: NICE NG226: Osteoarthritis in over 16s - diagnosis and management; British Orthopaedic Association (BOA) - guidance and patient information.

When to seek medical advice

Seek urgent medical help (NHS 111 or A&E) if a joint suddenly becomes hot, red and swollen and you feel unwell or feverish.

Stop the exercises and get advice from your GP, physiotherapist or Mr Umar's team if:

- Pain increases a lot and has not settled by the next day, despite reducing the exercises
- The knee or hip locks, gives way repeatedly or you cannot put weight on it
- You develop new swelling, numbness or pins and needles in the leg
- Pain wakes you every night or you feel generally unwell



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Questions?

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This is general guidance. Always follow the specific advice from your own clinical team, as your care may differ.

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