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## Exercise as Treatment

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### Exercise is the best treatment for knee osteoarthritis.

Sadly, many people with painful knees are not exercising. A lot of people with painful knees think they shouldn't exercise. But, exercise is a vital part of managing knee pain. Even very painful knees.

#### Regular exercise:



keeps joints healthy and moving



maintains fitness



improves mood



maintains weight



reduces the risk of health conditions that can make managing knee pain harder (obesity, heart conditions, diabetes)



can lower feelings of social isolation if done with other people

### 3 common MYTHS about painful knees & exercise

Let's discuss common reasons people with painful knees might not be exercising.

#### Exercise will do further damage to my joint

The opposite is true. Think of exercise as a joint lubricant. Many people avoid using their painful knee for fear of making it worse. But, when we don't move our joints, they become more stiff. The muscles around the knee become less supportive. Over time, this can lead to more pain and stiffness.

Think about how your knee feels in the morning. You might have stiffness, which improves once the knee gets moving and 'warms up'. The old saying of 'use it – or lose it' holds true. The knees need movement to keep them as healthy as possible.

#### Last time I exercised my knee pain got worse

Pain during an exercise doesn't mean you're doing harm. It's common to feel pain in your muscles or knee during or straight after exercise. It's a normal response to exercise. It doesn't mean your knee is getting worse or that exercise isn't good for your knee. Remember pain isn't an accurate measure of the knee joint's condition. But, if knee pain is worse for more than one day after the exercise you might have done too much. This doesn't mean exercise isn't good for your knee. It just means you did a bit too much too soon. If this happens make a change to your exercise program. Leave out the exercise which caused the problem or make the exercise easier.

#### I've exercised before, it didn't make a difference. It was a waste of time

Don't be alarmed if exercise doesn't result in immediate pain relief. It takes time and commitment to see benefits. Benefits build up over time. You should notice some benefits after a few weeks. But it can take up to 12 weeks to see real changes in your pain and ability. Sticking to the program is key. Aim to keep doing regular and achievable amounts of exercise.

To see benefits you should also keep challenging yourself. Progress your exercise routine when it becomes easy. This way you keep improving. There will come a time when the exercise you are doing is just right. When it stays challenging and never becomes too easy. This is expected. When this happens it's about maintenance. Don't stop. Stick with the same level of exercise and keep your knee healthy and strong.

Watch each video to hear from knee pain experts and people with persistent knee pain. Hear more about exercise as treatment for knee pain and what's considered normal and safe pain with exercise. <http://mykneeexercise.org.au/my-knee-education/>

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## References

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