Knee osteoarthritis: evidence-based treatment choices

Patient information | October 2026

The starting point

NICE recommends therapeutic exercise tailored to the person, including strengthening and general aerobic exercise. Information and support are central; weight management may help when relevant.

Hands-on treatment

For knee or hip osteoarthritis, manual therapy can be considered alongside therapeutic exercise, but NICE says there is insufficient evidence to support it as a stand-alone treatment.

Injections

NICE says that corticosteroid injections may be considered in selected circumstances, with short-term relief of around 2 to 10 weeks. NICE advises against intra-articular hyaluronan injections for osteoarthritis.

Imaging and specialist review

Routine imaging is not necessary for typical osteoarthritis. If symptoms are severe, disabling or not improving with appropriate management, a clinician may discuss further assessment or referral.

Questions for your appointment

What matters most to you? Which exercises will be suitable? How do we assess progress? What is the expected duration of any treatment benefit? What are the alternatives and risks?

References

NICE (2022) *Osteoarthritis in over 16s: diagnosis and management*, NG226. https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng226/chapter/recommendations

This leaflet is general education and not an individual diagnosis. For severe or rapidly worsening symptoms seek urgent professional care.