

Podiatry Services

Patient Information Leaflet

Osteoarthritis Myths*

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1. In cases of arthrosis, the joint should be protected and not loaded

In people with knee joint arthrosis, low activity is associated with a tendency towards a greater thinning of cartilage in MRI. Studies show that moderate running does not worsen the structural progression of osteoarthritis and is associated with a higher probability of an improvement in joint pain and function. This was independent of BMI, the degree of osteoarthritis and other factors.

2. The worse the imaging looks, the worse the joint is

Imaging, such as X-ray and magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), is a standard tool used to diagnose osteoarthritis. However, only 50% of the people with radiographic osteoarthritis have clinical symptoms. The assessment of a person's signs and symptoms may be more clinically relevant than the imaging findings, especially with regard to therapy.

3. Conservative treatments are ineffective and only able to delay joint replacement surgery

Education, lifestyle and dietary changes, and exercise are the cornerstone of non-operative management. Treatment options should be employed progressively, starting with more conservative treatments and then progressing to pharmacological and invasive interventions as needed. Exercise can positively influence pain, muscle function, body weight, cardiovascular fitness, mood and disease progression.

4. Joint Replacement surgery is inevitable

Disease trajectories differ from person to person and are multifactorial. Many people may never reach the point where total joint replacement surgery is appropriate or necessary. Not everyone benefits from joint replacement surgery, with a portion of people continuing to report long-term joint pain after surgery.

Many myths exist about osteoarthritis, and some will limit the potential benefits that people may gain from conservative treatment. Busting these myths will lead to a better understanding of osteoarthritis and could contribute to better outcomes for people living with the disease. Therapists are well placed to do this through effective education of patients and by leading the implementation of best-practice care.

If you have any questions about the information in this leaflet, please contact Podiatry Services. Further information about the service and how to manage a range of foot health problems yourself, can also be found on our website:

www.livewellsouthwest.co.uk/project/podiatry

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* Based on "Time to bust common osteoarthritis myths", Physio Meets Science: Brien, D.W., Chapple, C.M., Baldwin, J.N., & Larmer, P.J. (2019)