

# Osteoarthritis of the hip

*Revised March 2006*



ARTHRITIS CARE

*Empowering  
people with arthritis.*

Osteoarthritis (OA) of the hip is a common condition that affects both men and women, of all ages, equally. The pain experienced from OA of the hip may be felt in the buttock region, groin and front of the thigh. Also, pain from the hip is sometimes felt in the leg and around the knee area, this is called referred pain. With OA of the hip, stiffness and reduced range of movement are common.

It has been suggested that for most people, OA in the hip develops slowly and only a minority of people will then go on to develop the 'severe' condition. Recent evidence suggests that it may take three months to three years for 'severe' OA of the hip to occur.

## **Mild to moderate disease**

Many people with OA of the hip, particularly younger men, manage well for many years. With OA of the hip, it is beneficial to wear shoes with shock absorbing insoles and, if you are overweight, to lose weight. Remember, the Arthritis Care Helpline Team can provide you with information on comfortable footwear, weight loss and healthy eating.

Gentle exercise is very important to maintain your range of movement. (see Arthritis Care's booklet *Exercise and Arthritis*). Exercises that keep the muscles around the hip strong are important. One good exercise is to stand with your good hip by a table, leaning on the table with your hand, letting your outside leg swing backwards and forwards. It is also good to exercise the hip whilst lying down on the floor or bed. For more suggestions you can request a fact sheet from our helplines service: *Exercise beats Arthritis – Hips*.

Swimming, cycling and hydrotherapy can be particularly beneficial in stretching and building the muscles. When walking, you may find it best to start with short strides, gradually lengthening the strides as you loosen up. Also, you may find occasional physiotherapy sessions helpful.

Drugs have a limited role in mild arthritis but analgesics, when used sparingly can be useful. There can be periods of either days or weeks, when your symptoms are particularly acute and you may respond well to taking a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID), such as Ibuprofen (Advil), Nabumetone (Reliflex), Diclofenac (Voltarol) etc. However, most doctors discourage continuous or extensive use of NSAIDs, due to side effects such as gastrointestinal bleeding. It is advisable to discuss with your doctor the type of NSAID that would be appropriate for you. Side effects such as gastrointestinal bleeds can be avoided by taking a pro-proton inhibitor (PPI) such as Esomeprazole (Nexium), Omeprazole (Losec) etc as that can protect your stomach.

Some doctors may recommend an injection with corticosteroids, whilst

other doctors are of the opinion that injections should be avoided because frequent injections may damage the cartilage and bone. Unfortunately, injections often don't help much and are at best occasionally helpful, because there is not much inflammation to be suppressed.



### **Severe disease**

People with severe OA of the hip often have severe pain which can also affect them at night. Leg shortening may occur and there can be muscle wastage around the joint. It becomes much more difficult to carry out routine activities. You may notice greater difficulty in walking up steps or find putting on socks/stockings due to increased stiffness of the hip. You may also experience pain at night when changing positions during sleep. Greater use of NSAIDs may therefore be needed. Physiotherapy and hydrotherapy will be very useful at this stage.

If you have severe OA in your hip, surgery could be an option. The vast majority of people find total hip replacement operations successful and hip prostheses are becoming more robust and long-lasting, with shorter recovery periods. Remember, you can contact the Arthritis Care Helplines Team for further information and support.

**Arthritis Care Helpline: (Freephone) 0808 800 4050  
(weekdays, 10am-4pm)**

### **Note**

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## Arthritis Care

Arthritis Care is the UK's largest voluntary organisation working with and for all people with arthritis.

Our publications are just one of the many services Arthritis Care provides. These include a confidential helpline, self-management and awareness training, information for people with arthritis and health professionals, and local activity and support. We also campaign locally and nationally to help change attitudes and laws and to ensure people with arthritis have access to the treatments and services they need and deserve.

## Contact us

For confidential information and support, contact the Arthritis Care Helpline

**Freephone: 0808 800 4050**

10am-4pm (weekdays)

Email: [Helplines@arthritiscare.org.uk](mailto:Helplines@arthritiscare.org.uk)

For information about Arthritis Care and the services we offer, contact us at:

**[www.arthritiscare.org.uk](http://www.arthritiscare.org.uk)**

### Arthritis Care UK office and England regional services:

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