

## **Arthritis** (Non Surgical Options)

### **Modify your lifestyle**

This is often a very difficult thing to do, but is very important. If you are young this is the most important, as surgery often needs re-doing when you are older and the second operation is bigger and more risky than the first.

Look at when you get the pain in your knee and what it stops you doing. Then think is there something else that I like that I can do instead that does not hurt my knee?

Work must be considered. Surgery does not guarantee that you will return to your physical job afterwards. Therefore if you are young to change jobs and put off surgery is better than having surgery and having to change jobs.

### **Regular exercise**

Exercise 2 – 3 times per week for 30 – 45 minutes makes you and your knee feel better. It tones the muscles within your leg. Swimming, cycling, rowing and cross trainers are the best. Running is to be avoided as it jars the knee.

### **Reduce weight**

If you are overweight you are 4 times more likely to complain of knee pain, with the same X-ray changes as people who are not overweight. Or if you are overweight and reduce to a normal weight you have a 3 out of 4 chance of your knee pain going away. Your doctor will help you with this if needed, but it is not easy.

### **Regular painkillers**

All painkillers have a safe limit which if kept within will not harm you. Discuss with your doctor the best painkillers for you. If you are about to do something that will hurt your knee, take the painkillers before you start. Do not wait until your knee is painful.

### **Sticks**

Using a stick properly can remove half of the pressure from your knee when you are walking. The stick should be used in the opposite hand to the painful knee (painful right knee, stick in left hand). The height and how you use a stick can be checked by a physiotherapist.

### **Physiotherapy**

This is useful to maintain the movement within your knee. Arthritic knees often stop being able to go straight. This makes your legs get tired when you are walking, as the muscles cannot relax. Physiotherapy can help you keep or regain the movement in your knee.

### **Glucosamine & Chondrin Sulphate**

These can be bought from the chemist or health food shop. They are the building blocks of the fluid within the knee. They help with the pain the knee in 1 in 3 people. They must be taken daily for 2 months to see if they work. They should not be taken by diabetics.

### **Injections**

These are controversial and should always be done under sterile conditions.

*Local anaesthetic* – Help to show if pain is coming from the knee or elsewhere. Their effect does not last long.

*Steroid* – These can remove inflammation from a joint, but how long that lasts is variable.

They prevent joint replacements being performed for 6 months, due to the risk of infection.

*Hyaluronic acid* – These are artificial lubricants that do not give lasting pain relief.