

Arthritis

Arthritis occurs when the articular cartilage within the knee wears out. This allows the two bones to rub together and cause pain.

Normally the ends of the bone within the knee are covered with articular cartilage (a shiny white gristle). This allows the two bones to slide easily over each other when the knee is moved. They are helped by a small amount of thick fluid within the joint.

Arthritis comes in two forms:

Osteoarthritis

This is the commonest type. It is a wear and tear process within the knee. The articular cartilage wears away due to the stresses placed upon it. These stresses can be increased by injuries in the past such as anterior cruciate ligament injuries. The stresses can also be increased by previous surgery such as removal of cartilages (menisci).

Rheumatoid Arthritis

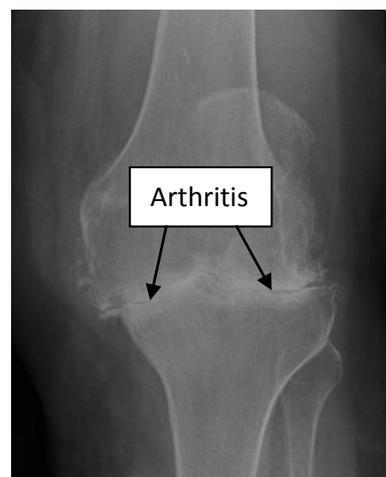
This is a problem that often runs in families. It is a problem of the whole body, not just the knees. The joints become inflamed, red and swollen. The inflamed lining of the knee and poor quality fluid within the knee allow the articular cartilage to become damaged.

Arthritis causes pain within a joint when it is used. This often limits what you can do and starts to limit your ordinary activities.

As the arthritis gets worse the bones can become worn away and the knee bends sideways. Often the knee stops going straight which limits your walking as the leg get “tired”.

Diagnosis is usually made from the history of your pain. Your doctor should examine you to check your spine, hips, circulation and nerves in your feet. Problems with any of these can mimic arthritic knee pain when walking.

X-rays confirm the presence of arthritis.



Treatment

Non surgical options (Used first)

- Modify your lifestyle.
- Regular exercise to tone the muscles.
- Reduce weight (if overweight).
- Regular painkillers.
- A stick used in the opposite hand.
- Physiotherapy to regain lost movement.
- Glucosamine & Chondrin sulphate.
(provided not diabetic)
- Injections in very rare cases.

Surgery

(after discussion with your surgeon)

- Total Knee Replacement.
- Arthroscopy / Keyhole surgery.
- High Tibial Osteotomy.
(re-align the leg)
- Unicompartmental knee replacement.
(part knee replacement)
- Patellofemoral knee replacement.
(knee cap replacement)