

Knee Pain

Patient Information Leaflet

MSK Musculoskeletal Physiotherapy Service



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www.leicspart.nhs.uk/msk-physiotherapy-resources-getting-started/

What causes knee pain?

Most people get knee pain at some point in their lives. It can hurt, but it is usually **not caused by anything serious**.

Anyone can get knee pain, but it is more common as we get older.

Your knee is a joint made of bones and cartilage. It is held together and supported by ligaments, tendons and muscles. Pain can happen when any of these are irritated or injured.

Common causes of knee pain

- Starting a new sport, hobby or exercise.
- Repetitive movement of the knee.
- Injuries from an accident or a fall.
- Muscle or tendon strains/tears.
- Conditions like osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis or fibromyalgia.
- Being overweight, which puts extra pressure on the knee.
- Poor sleep, stress or anxiety, feeling run down or smoking can also make pain feel worse.

Sometimes, there is **no clear cause**. In these cases, simple self-help usually improves the pain within a few weeks.

What are the symptoms?

You may feel:

- pain at the front, inside, outside or back of the knee.
- pain may spread up the thigh or down the calf or shin

You may also experience:

- swelling or bruising
- stiffness or difficulty moving the knee
- weakness in the thigh or leg muscles e.g. quadriceps (front of thigh) or hamstrings (back of thigh)
- redness, warmth around the knee
- the knee giving way or causing you to fall.
- the knee getting stuck and not moving properly (“locking”)

Self-help

Knee pain usually gets better within **6–8 weeks**. Try some of these tips to help:

- for the first few days, change or reduce your usual activities or exercise, for example, try cycling instead of running – as your pain improves, slowly return to your normal activities
- ask your pharmacist about short-term pain relief

- try to stay at work or return as soon as you can – your employer, GP or health professional can help you return gradually
- try and get a good night's sleep – a pillow between your knees may help you feel more comfortable

Should I refer myself to physiotherapy?

Physiotherapy may help if:

- your knee pain is not improving after a few weeks despite the above advice
- pain is affecting your work or daily activities
- you experience recurrent episodes of knee pain

When should I seek medical advice?

Call 111 for advice or visit your local Urgent Care Centre if:

- your knee is hot, red, swollen and painful
- you have had an injury e.g. a fall or twisting movement
- you cannot put weight on your leg or walk properly
- you cannot straighten your knee
- your knee keeps giving way
- you feel unwell, have a fever or flu-like symptoms

Contact your **GP** if:

- your knee pain is getting worse over time

Remember

Most knee pain will improve with **time, gentle movement** and a **gradual return to normal activities**.

If you need help to understand this leaflet or would like it in a different language or format such as large print, Braille or audio, please ask a member of staff.



MSK Physiotherapy Service

Find out more about the MSK Physiotherapy Service and what we offer

www.leicspart.nhs.uk/service/musculoskeletal-msk-therapy-physiotherapy/



Further Resources

Access our other MSK Physiotherapy resources [www.leicspart.nhs.uk/msk-](http://www.leicspart.nhs.uk/msk-physiotherapy-resources-getting-started/)

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