AUSTRALIAN COMMISSION ON SAFETY AND QUALITY IN HEALTH CARE





Osteoarthritis of the knee

This quick guide for general practitioners is based on the *Osteoarthritis of the Knee Clinical Care Standard (2024)*. For more information see the complete Standard.

ASSESS	Physical examination and functional assessment*
Comprehensive person-centred clinical assessment	 History Comorbidities, risk factors, treatment response Symptoms: pain, morning stiffness, movement
	Atypical features/alternate diagnoses Knee trauma Malignancy
	 Prolonged morning stiffness Rapid worsening Hot swollen joint Possible referred pain from hip or spine pathology
	 Psychosocial evaluation* Quality of life, daily activities Emotional/mental health, health beliefs Social, financial, geographical, and cultural factors
	 Imaging? Not routinely required Knee osteoarthritis can be confidently diagnosed on clinical assessment For atypical features or if clinically warranted, X-ray is first line
PLAN	Education and self-management* Encourage helpful beliefs Social and neurobalagical health
Tailored self-management plan developed with the patient	 Social and psychological health Pain medicines Physical activity and weight Refer or recommend services as appropriate
	 Physical activity and exercise Preferred exercise and activities Managing pain during activity, flares Pacing
	 Weight management and nutrition Nutrition advice Weight management strategies: behavioural, medical or surgical
REVIEW	Repeat clinical assessment Assess response to treatment Review self-management goals
Regular ongoing review of symptoms and strategies	Worsening symptoms and/or severe functional impairment despite optimal non-surgical management?

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*See Effective communication for knee osteoarthritis.