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Exercise and Osteoarthritis



After receiving a diagnosis of "arthritis of the knee," which is the most common form of osteoarthritis, you might be surprised when your doctor recommends exercise. Because osteoarthritis involves a progressive deterioration of the protective joint cartilage, the bone is exposed within the joint—leading many to believe that exercise would only intensify the condition. This, however, is not the case, but not just any type of exercise is sufficient. Recreational activities are not a substitute for therapeutic exercises designed by a physical therapist.

Designing a program: Finding an exercise program that fits your unique lifestyle and osteoarthritis symptoms is important for managing your condition. We are well

versed in osteoarthritis treatment, particularly in the knee, and will discuss your symptoms, lifestyle and any challenges and risks that may compromise treatment. Many current studies support the success and safety of both aerobic and strengthening exercises for osteoarthritis. It is important to keep muscles active and strengthen the muscles around the knee, which then encourages proper knee functioning. Goals of physical therapy for osteoarthritis include:

- **Reducing** pain;
- **Improving** function and range of motion; and
- **Strengthening** key muscles.

Physical therapists will use therapeutic, custom-tailored exercises to provide maximum benefit for treating your osteoarthritis. Methods vary, but may include one or more of the following:

- Active and passive **range of motion** exercises;
- **Manual therapy** exercises;
- **Moderate aerobic** exercises; and
- **Strength-training** exercises.

Osteoarthritis can be very painful, and when it strikes the knee, it can be particularly debilitating and frustrating to manage. Fortunately, our skills and experience can support the provision of a successful exercise program. This will aid in preventing further deterioration of the knee while simultaneously strengthening the surrounding muscles and improving the fitness and mobility of your entire body.