



THE OSTEOARTHRITIS STARTER GUIDE

Practical tips you can start today!

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G E N U I N E P H Y S I O



AN EVIDENCED-BASED APPROACH

This guide is grounded in current clinical guidelines and research into osteoarthritis management.

It focuses on what genuinely makes a difference — not trends, fear-based narratives, or outdated advice.

You may find that some of this challenges things you've previously been told about arthritis. That's okay.

Everything inside is built around one principle: Start with what works.

While your symptoms are personal, the core principles that improve osteoarthritis are consistent.

Once those foundations are in place, your approach can be adjusted and refined to suit you.



LUKE SCHEMBRI

FOUNDER OF GENUINE PHYSIO

I am Luke Schembri, an Advanced Physiotherapist and founder of Genuine Physio.

I work at an advanced clinical level across the full musculoskeletal pathway, from rehabilitation and progressive strength training, through to imaging decisions, injection therapy and surgical referral when necessary.

I regularly collaborate with local orthopaedic consultants and medical colleagues, which allows me to see the complete picture of osteoarthritis management.

That means I am not limited to one approach.

If conservative treatment is appropriate, it should be structured and progressed properly. If further investigation or intervention is needed, that decision should be based on clear reasoning.

My aim is simple.

To help you make informed decisions and manage osteoarthritis with confidence, not fear.

CONTENTS

1
UNDERSTANDING OSTEOARTHRITIS

2
DO YOU NEED A SCAN?

3
WHAT ACTUALLY WORKS?

4
WHERE TO GO FROM HERE



CHAPTER 1

UNDERSTANDING OSTEOARTHRITIS

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UNDERSTANDING OSTEOARTHRITIS

Osteoarthritis is a common, age-related process that affects the structures within a joint, including cartilage, bone and surrounding tissues.

It is extremely common, particularly after the age of 50.

Importantly, joint change and pain are not the same thing.

Many people have visible osteoarthritic changes on scans and little to no pain. Others experience pain with relatively minor structural change.

Pain is influenced by multiple factors, including strength, movement, sleep, stress, inflammation and overall health.

This is why osteoarthritis is not simply “wear and tear”.

Joints and surrounding tissues respond to load over time. Avoiding movement can reduce strength and capacity, whereas, appropriate, progressive loading can improve both.

Osteoarthritis is not a sentence to decline.

It is a condition that responds to the right approach.





CHAPTER 2

DO YOU NEED A
SCAN?

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DO YOU NEED A SCAN?



In most cases, osteoarthritis is a clinical diagnosis. This means it is diagnosed based on your symptoms and physical examination, not purely on imaging.

X-rays and MRI scans can be useful in certain situations, but they are not routinely required to confirm osteoarthritis.

There are several reasons for this:

First, scan findings often do not match pain levels. Many people have visible osteoarthritic changes and little to no pain, while others experience pain with relatively minor structural change.

Second, most people over the age of 40 will show some degree of joint change on imaging. These findings are common and often represent normal age-related changes.

Third, imaging rarely changes the initial management plan. The first-line approach remains education, exercise and lifestyle modification.

Scans are appropriate if symptoms are rapidly worsening, if there are red flags, or if inflammatory arthritis or another condition is suspected.

For the majority of people, treatment begins conservatively, with a clear and structured approach.



3

CHAPTER

WHAT ACTUALLY WORKS

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WHAT ACTUALLY WORKS?

When it comes to osteoarthritis, not all treatments carry the same weight.

Some approaches are strongly supported by evidence. Others may help in certain situations but should not replace the fundamentals.

The strongest evidence consistently supports three key foundations:

Education and advice - accurate, reassuring and grounded in current evidence

Exercise

Weight management, where appropriate

Exercise is not one single activity. It includes:

Strength training

Cardiovascular activity

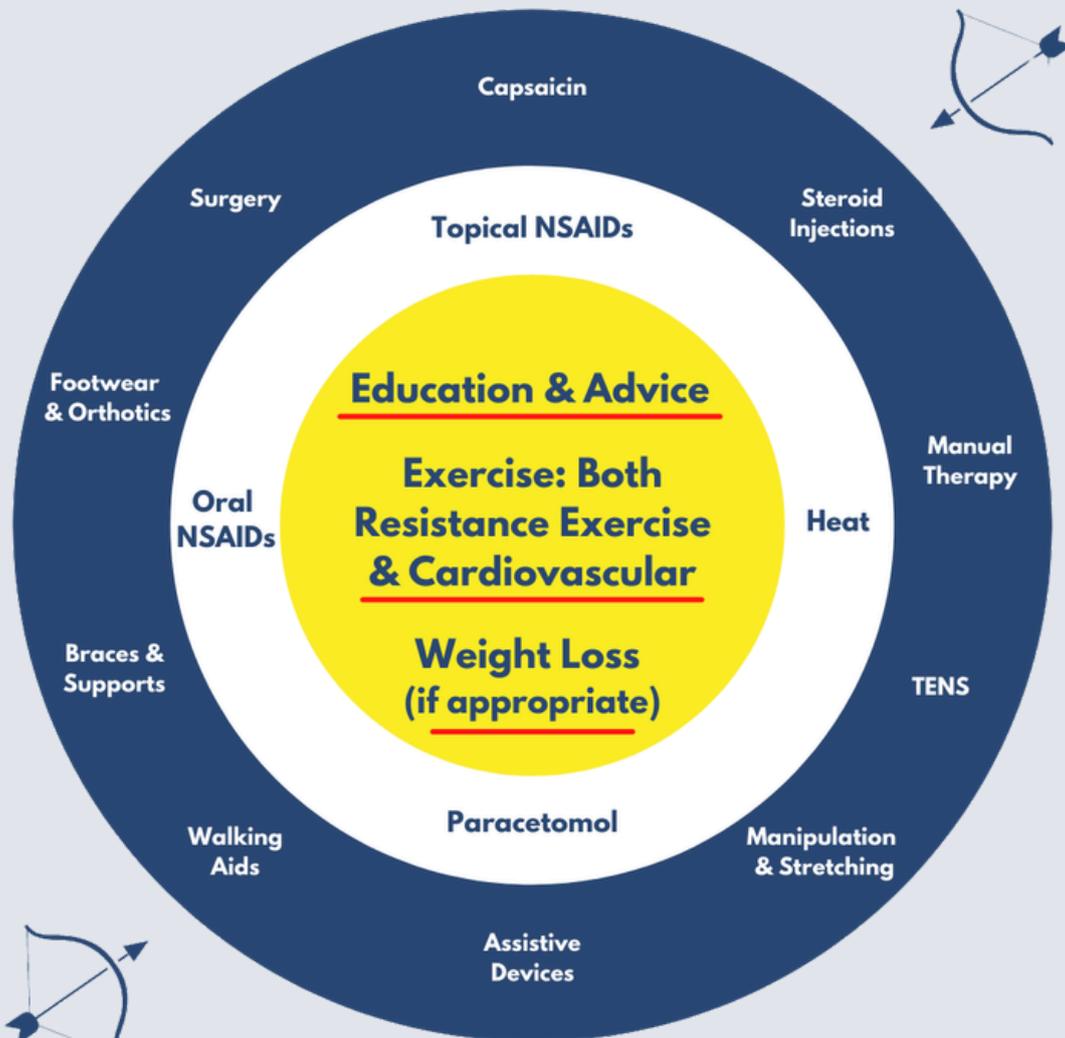
Maintaining joint range and flexibility

These foundations are not quick fixes. They are the building blocks of long-term improvement.

If you focus on what matters most first, progress becomes far more predictable.



THE OSTEOARTHRITIS TREATMENT TARGET



Based on guidelines from the National Institute of Health & Care Excellence

The centre of the target represents the interventions with the strongest evidence in osteoarthritis management.

These are the foundations and should form the core of your approach.

The outer circles represent additional treatments that may support progress in certain situations, but they should not replace the basics.

When the foundations are strong, everything else becomes more effective.

EXERCISE

Exercise is the most effective non-surgical treatment for osteoarthritis.

But it needs to be structured properly. This is where most people go wrong.

Effective exercise includes three elements:

Strength training

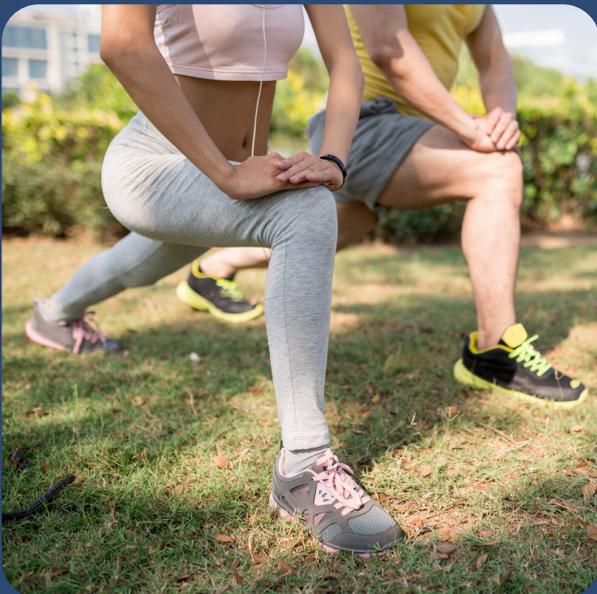
Cardiovascular activity

Maintaining joint range and flexibility

Strength training should be progressive. This means gradually increasing load over time to improve joint capacity and resilience. Cardiovascular activity supports overall health and can reduce stiffness.

Maintaining joint range, particularly extension in the knee and hip, supports normal movement patterns.

Consistency matters more than intensity. Structure matters more than randomness.



WEIGHT AND INFLAMMATION

AIM FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN DIET

Weight management can play an important role in osteoarthritis, particularly for weight-bearing joints such as the knee and hip.

Even modest reductions in body weight can significantly reduce joint load.

Beyond mechanics, excess body fat is associated with low-grade systemic inflammation, which may influence joint pain and overall tissue health.

A Mediterranean-style pattern of eating is consistently associated with improved metabolic and inflammatory health:

- Increase fruit and vegetables
- Reduce processed foods
- Moderate refined carbohydrates
- Limit excess alcohol

The goal is not perfection. It is consistency.

Small, sustainable changes compound over time.





CHAPTER 4

WHERE TO GO FROM
HERE

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WHERE TO GO FROM HERE

This starter guide introduces the foundations of osteoarthritis management.

But understanding the principles and applying them confidently over time are two different things.

The **Ultimate Osteoarthritis Guide** is a structured 12-chapter resource that takes you further.

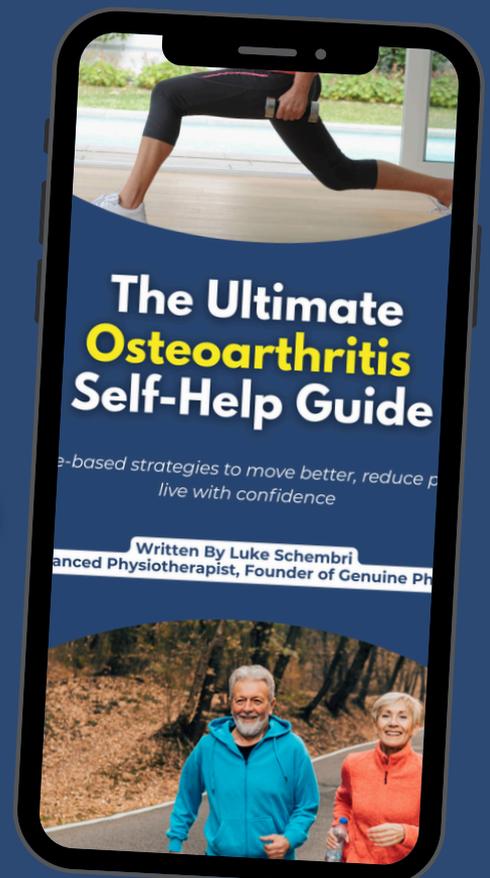
It explores:

- A modern understanding of osteoarthritis
- The factors that influence joint pain
- How pain works
- What genuinely helps and what does not
- The role of mindset and beliefs
- Exercise selection and progression
- How to personalise your approach
- How to stay active long term
- Flare-up management
- Clear next steps

It brings everything together in one structured pathway so you can move from uncertainty to confidence.

If you would like a deeper, more complete guide to follow, you can learn more here:

[👉 The Ultimate Self Help Osteoarthritis Guide](#)



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