



## West Berkshire Physiotherapy service Leaflet 12 Osteoarthritis of the Hip

This condition involves the gradual roughening of the cartilage covering the ends of the bones making up the hip joint, causing wear and tear. It is associated with changes in the underlying bone, which may cause pain and impaired function. This condition does not follow the same course in everybody and there are certain things you can do to help yourself and prevent problems occurring in the future.

1. Osteoarthritis tends to affect weight bearing joints, therefore:
  - a. Avoid becoming overweight as this can lead to increasing stress on the joints and increased pain. If overweight, then losing weight can help.
  - b. Avoid, where possible, carrying heavy loads. Balance loads between both hands and decrease the loads by increasing the number of journeys.
2. Avoid sitting for prolonged periods of time as this can cause stiffness. Try to get up and walk around or alter your position regularly i.e. every 20 to 30 minutes. Remain as active as you can; this will also help with weight loss. Activities to consider:
  - a. Swimming is good – be careful with breaststroke as some hips do not like the twisting action.
  - b. Cycling can also be helpful – it is important to have the saddle correctly adjusted (not too low) and avoid lots of hills.
3. Heat may be helpful to release muscle tension and pain. You could use a wheat pack or a hot water bottle (make sure it has a cover).
4. Your GP may be able to offer help in the form of painkillers (analgesics) and/or anti-inflammatory medication that will help to alleviate the symptoms and allow you to become more active.

### Exercises

Exercise can be very helpful in keeping the muscles as strong as possible and helping to support the joint. You may find the following exercises useful. If possible they should be performed twice a day.

1. Bridging – Lying on your bed, knees bent. Clench your buttocks and lift your bottom a few inches off the bed. Hold for five seconds, breathing normally then slowly relax back down. Do 5 or 10 times, twice daily.



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2. **Sitting Hip Flexion.** Sit comfortably on a firm chair. Slowly lift right knee towards your chest as far as comfortably possible, then slowly lower. Repeat the exercise with the left leg.



3. **Sitting Hip Rotation**  
While sitting in a chair with your knees bent, slide your left foot back so the right leg can move to the left without interference. Swing your lower right leg like a pendulum, from side to side, with the knee and thigh acting as the axis of rotation (see picture below). Repeat this movement with the left leg.



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### 4. Sideways lift.

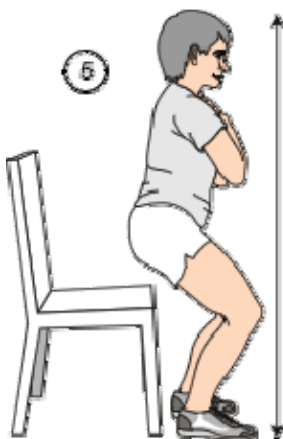
Holding onto the back of a chair, slowly lift your leg out sideways, keeping your body in the middle (avoid leaning to the other side). Hold for 5 seconds then slowly lower the leg back to the middle.

Do 5 to 10 times on each leg, twice daily.



### 5. Sit to stand –

Sitting with your arms crossed, or out in front of you. Slowly lean forward and stand up. Then slowly sit down. You may need to use your arms to help at first. Try not to drop into the chair. The lower the chair, the more difficult the exercise. Do 5 to 10 times, twice daily.



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### 6. Balance exercises

Practise standing on one leg whilst holding onto the back of a chair. Clench the muscles in your buttocks as you stand there. If this is too easy, try to let go of the chair and just hover your hands above the chair so you can grab hold if needs be. When your leg gets tired, swap legs. Do 2 or 3 on each leg, twice daily.



### 7. Hip stretch.

Holding onto a wall or chair, bend your knee and hold your foot, as in the picture. (If you can't reach to hold the foot you may need to loop a towel around the ankle and hold that instead). Hold for 30 seconds to give the tight muscles a good opportunity to stretch, then slowly release. Swap legs and repeat on the other leg. Do 2 on each leg, twice daily.



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