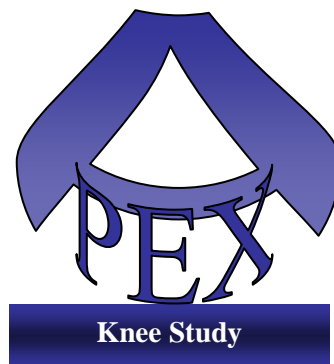


APEX Knee Study:

Acupuncture, Physiotherapy
and Exercise



Knee Problems

An Information Leaflet

MREC No: 02/07/114

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Introduction

This leaflet is designed to help people with knee problems. To begin with it will discuss what the knees do, and what may have caused the problems. It will then go on to discuss how to cope with these problems.

At the back of this leaflet there are some addresses of organisations that provide some helpful advice for people who have knee problems.

What do knees do and how do they work?

Your knees provide stable support for your body and allow your legs to bend and straighten. Both flexibility and stability are needed for standing and for motions such as:

- Walking
- Running
- Crouching
- Jumping

Several supporting and moving parts, which include: bones, cartilage, muscle, ligaments, and tendons help the knee to do its job. Any one of these parts can be involved in knee problems.

What can cause a Knee Problem?

Many things can cause knee problems, although there are two general causes:

- **Mechanical**

Some knee problems result from injury, such as a direct blow or sudden movements that put added strain on your knees, and thus resulting the knee to strain beyond its normal range of movements.

- **Inflammatory Knee Problems**

Inflammation that occurs in certain rheumatic diseases, such as rheumatoid arthritis and systemic lupus erythematosus can damage the knee.

How do I cope with a knee problem?

There are a number of ways in which you can cope with a knee problem.

- **Losing weight**

If you are overweight, although you may find it difficult, losing weight will help with your knee problem. Studies have shown that people who have lost excess weight have had less knee problems than those who have not. Eating a healthy diet, containing lots of fruit and

vegetables, white meat and fish will help you loose weight. Staying away from high calorie foods will also help.

- **Exercise**

Joints and muscles **have to be moved** to keep them healthy, even if you have pain; too much rest may be **bad** for your joints.

The benefits of exercise can include gaining more control over your knee problem and improving your ability to do your daily activities.

Exercises that can be done at home, requiring little or no equipment are highly effective.

Your physiotherapist will provide you with a sheet of exercises that are tailored to your specific needs.

Physiotherapists are experts at teaching exercises, which may strengthen your knees and enable you to do your daily activities. They can help to set realistic goals and balance your daily activities so that you can manage better. They will also offer you specific advice for your knee problem and may supply you with an aid such as a walking stick or zimmer frame if they feel this is appropriate.

- **Energy Conservation**

Pace yourself. This means balancing the day's activities by dividing it into periods of rest and activity. You may need to try several options, alone or in combination, before it helps to settle your knee problem. It helps to prioritise your activities and break them up into manageable amounts spread throughout the day, keeping to this routine even when your knee is okay.

- **Heat and Cold**

You may find that heat helps with the pain caused from your knee problem. Use a hot water bottle wrapped in a towel and applied for 15 minutes at a time only, this can be done up to four times a day

If heat does not help then try cold. Ice packs, e.g. a bag of frozen peas wrapped in a damp cloth, applied for 10 minutes at a time only. You could do this up to four times daily.

There are also hot and cold sprays and creams to massage into your knee. These can be obtained from your local pharmacy.

- **Wearing the correct shoes**

Believe it or not there are five qualities in a good shoe and if you have these it should help with your knee problem:

- A flat style
- Broad forefoot
- Soft upper
- Thick/soft sole
- Support for arches of the foot.

- **Pain Killers**

Paracetamol is a very safe and effective painkiller. Two tablets (Total of 1g) can be taken at any time and may give relief that lasts up to 6 hours. You can safely take 2 tablets 3-4 times a day. This may be all you need to control your pain caused by your knee problem.

If you find that Paracetamol doesn't help then you can obtain stronger painkillers from your GP, e.g. Paracetamol and codeine are very effective, but can cause stomach upsets and constipation.

Anti-inflammatory drugs, such as ibuprofen, may be helpful for short-term relief of pain but can also cause side effects such as stomach upsets.

What else can I do?

- Make sure you do not keep your leg bent in the same position for long periods.
- Use a handrail for support when ascending and descending the stairs. You should place your

weakest leg down first when descending stairs for extra support. When ascending the stairs you should place your strongest leg first, only climbing one step at a time.

- **Be Positive** about your knee problem and don't be afraid to help yourself.
- Remember just because something helps someone else it doesn't mean it will help you.

Questions you want to ask

Please make a note of any questions you may want to ask your physiotherapist in the space below and they will be happy to answer them.

Useful Information

You may wish to note any useful information given by your physiotherapist in the space below and use it at a later date.

Some Useful Addressees

The Arthritis Research Campaign

PO Box 177

Chesterfield

Derbyshire

S41 7TQ

Tel: 0870 850 5000

www.arc.org.uk

Arthritis Care

18 Stephenson Way

London

NW1 2HD

Tel: 020 7380 6500

Helplines: 020 7380 6555 (10am – 4pm Mon-Fri)

Freephone 0808 800 4050 (12pm-4pm Mon-Fri).

www.arthritiscare.org.uk