



THE COMPLETE

Knee Osteoarthritis

Self-Management Workbook

A Practical, Physiotherapist-Guided Approach to Managing Symptoms, Building Strength and Moving with Confidence



Education • Progressive Exercise • Practical Tools • Long-Term Self-Management

Nathalie Agius
BSc (Hons) Physiotherapy | MMAP | SRP

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Welcome

If you are living with knee osteoarthritis (OA), you may have been given a lot of different—and sometimes conflicting—advice about what you should and shouldn't do.

You may have been told that your knee is “worn out,” that certain activities are bad for it, or that you simply need to learn to live with the pain. You may also be unsure about how much exercise to do, what to do when your symptoms flare up, or whether discomfort means that you are causing further damage.

This workbook has been created to help make things clearer.



Knee OA can affect people in very different ways, but having OA does not mean that you need to stop moving or give up the activities that are important to you. There are practical steps you can take to improve your strength, function and confidence while learning how to manage changes in your symptoms.

Throughout this workbook, you will learn more about what OA is, why symptoms can change from day to day, how to manage flare-ups, what treatment options are available, and how progressive exercise can help you gradually build your knee's capacity.

Most importantly, this is not designed to be a book that you simply read and put aside.

You will have opportunities to assess your starting point, identify meaningful goals, follow a progressive exercise programme, monitor your response, review your progress and develop strategies that you can continue using beyond the programme.

There is no expectation that every day will be the same or that progress will happen in a perfectly straight line. Some days will be easier than others. Your exercise programme may need to be adjusted along the way, and that is a normal part of the process.

The aim is not to protect your knee from every challenge or to achieve a completely symptom-free knee before you can live your life.

The aim is to help you understand your knee, keep moving, gradually build your strength and capacity, and feel more confident managing your OA over the long term.

Take the workbook at your own pace, use the sections that are most relevant to you, and return to them whenever you need them.

Let's get started.

Important Information

This workbook has been created by a physiotherapist to provide general education and practical guidance for people living with knee OA. It is designed to help you better understand your condition, become more confident with movement and exercise, and develop practical strategies for managing your knee.



The information and exercise guidance in this workbook are for **general educational purposes**. They are **not intended to replace an individual assessment, diagnosis, treatment plan or medical advice** from an appropriately qualified healthcare professional.

Everyone is different. Your symptoms, general health, physical abilities, previous injuries, medications and other health conditions may affect which activities or exercises are appropriate for you. The exercises and strategies in this workbook should therefore be **adapted to your individual needs and current abilities**.

Some discomfort during or after exercise can be acceptable, and symptoms may naturally fluctuate. However, do not assume that every new or changing symptom is simply due to OA. If your symptoms are severe, unusual for you, progressively worsening, or not responding as expected, seek advice from an appropriate healthcare professional.

For guidance on symptoms that may require professional assessment or more urgent medical attention, see **Chapter 6: When Should You Speak to a Healthcare Professional?**

This workbook is intended to support informed self-management—not to replace professional care when individual assessment or treatment is needed.

BEFORE BEGINNING THE EXERCISE PROGRAMME:

If you have a significant medical condition, have recently had an injury or surgery, have been advised to restrict exercise, or are unsure whether the programme is appropriate for you, seek advice from an appropriate healthcare professional before starting.

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How to Use This Workbook

You don't need to complete everything at once.

This workbook is designed to guide you from understanding your knee to taking practical steps to manage it. Work through it at your own pace, return to sections whenever you need them, and adapt the programme to your individual needs.



1. Understand

Learn about your knee and your options.

Start with **Chapters 1–3** to understand knee OA, why symptoms can fluctuate, how to manage flare-ups, and the treatment options available to you.



2. Assess

Find your starting point.

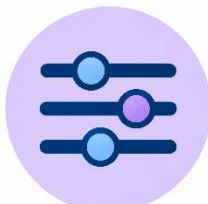
Complete **Chapter 4: My Starting Point**. This will help you identify how your knee is affecting you now, record some simple measures of function and confidence, and set goals that are meaningful to you.



3. Exercise

Start building strength and capacity.

Work through the progressive exercise programme in **Chapter 5**. Begin at an appropriate level and progress gradually according to your ability and how your knee responds. The suggested phases are a guide—not a deadline. You do not need to progress at the same rate as someone else.



4. Adapt

Know what to do when symptoms change.

Progress is not always a straight line. If your knee flares up, return to the strategies in **Chapter 2**. Temporarily adjust your activity or exercise where needed, keep gently moving, and gradually build back up as your symptoms settle.



5. Reassess

Look at how far you've come.

Return to the measures and goals you recorded in **Chapter 4**. Compare where you are now with where you started. Remember to look beyond pain. Improvements in strength, walking, stairs, confidence, activity tolerance and everyday function are all meaningful signs of progress.



6. Keep Going

Turn what you've learned into a long-term plan.

The goal is not to finish the programme and stop. It is to use what you have learned to continue building your strength and capacity, manage changes in symptoms and stay involved in the activities that matter to you.

Remember: You don't have to do everything perfectly. Focus on making manageable changes, building gradually and staying consistent over time.

Six steps to a stronger, more confident you



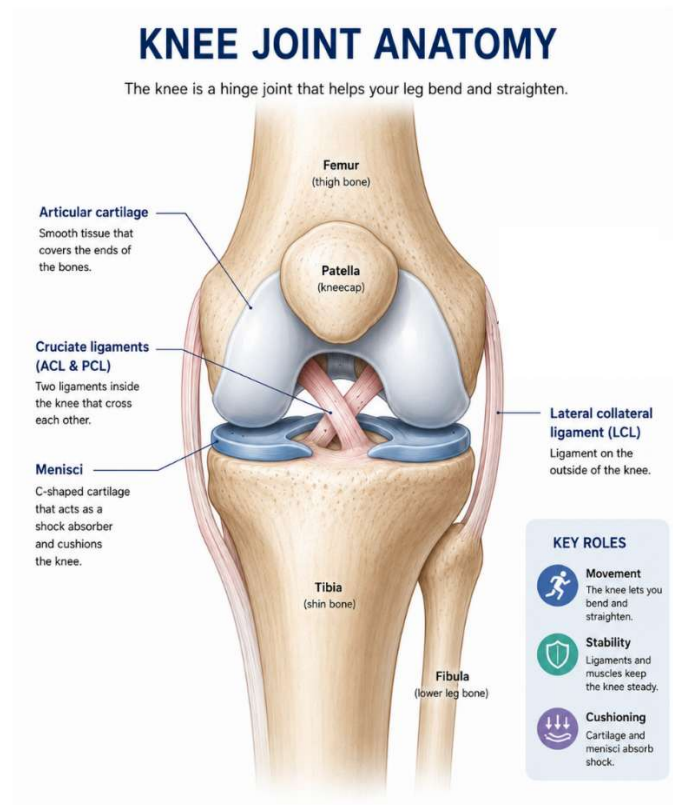
Chapter 1: Understanding Knee Osteoarthritis

Understand Your Knee. Challenge the Myths. Move with Confidence.

Knee OA is one of the most common causes of knee pain, particularly in older adults. For many years it has been described as gradual “wear and tear”, but now we know it’s much more complex than that.

Being diagnosed with knee OA does not mean that you have to stop doing the things you enjoy. In fact, staying active is one of the best ways to manage it. This workbook will help you understand OA and, most importantly, what you can do to manage your symptoms, maintain your independence and continue doing the things that matter to you.

OA explained



Your knee joint is made up of several structures that work together, including:

- **Cartilage** covering the ends of your bones, allowing them to glide smoothly over one another.
- **Bone** providing strength and support.
- **Synovium**, or joint lining, producing the fluid that lubricates the joint.
- **Ligaments** assisting knee stability.



My Flare-Up Plan

A step-by-step guide to help you manage increased symptoms and get back to doing what you enjoy.



MY KNEE IS MORE PAINFUL THAN USUAL



Is this similar to previous flare-ups?

You know your usual symptoms and what yours to trigger them.

YES

NO / UNSURE



1 Temporarily reduce aggravating activity

For example, walk shorter distances, take more breaks, reduce stairs and avoid long periods on your feet.



2 Keep gently moving

Gentle movement can help reduce stiffness and maintain your confidence and ability to move.



3 Modify exercises if needed

Reduce repetitions, use less resistance, try a smaller range of movement or choose an alternative exercise.



4 Monitor symptoms

Notice how your knee responds. If symptoms increase significantly, reduce the activity further and seek advice if needed.



5 Gradually increase activity

As symptoms settle, slowly build back towards your usual level. Avoid trying to 'catch up' by doing everything at once.



IBACK TOWARDS NORMAL

You're back on track, with a stronger, more confident knee.



Consider seeking professional advice

Your symptoms may be different from your usual flare-ups, getting worse, or not settling as expected.



Seek urgent medical advice if:

- Your knee becomes very hot, red or significantly swollen (especially if you feel unwell or have a fever).
- You have sudden severe pain, particularly if you cannot move the knee or put weight through your leg.
- Your knee becomes badly swollen or changes shape after an injury.
- You develop new numbness, weakness or changes in sensation.

See the "When Should You Speak to a Healthcare Professional?" section later in this workbook for more guidance.



Don't ask:

"Should I rest until the pain disappears?"



Ask:

"How can I adjust today's activity so I can keep moving and gradually build back up?"



A flare-up is setback, not a step backwards.

With the right approach, you can manage your symptoms and keep moving towards what matters to you.



Your Knee Osteoarthritis Treatment Plan

Many different treatments can help manage knee osteoarthritis. They can support your symptoms, function and long-term knee health.

*Different tools
for different needs.
A stronger you
for the future.*



THE FOUNDATIONS OF MANAGEMENT

These treatments have the strongest evidence and can help reduce symptoms, improve function and support long-term knee health.



Exercise
(therapeutic exercise)



Strength training
(build muscle strength)



Stay physically active
(in daily life)



Education and self-management



Weight management
(where appropriate)

Benefits include:

- ✓ Less pain and stiffness
- ✓ Better function and mobility
- ✓ Greater confidence
- ✓ Better quality of life



MAY HELP IN CERTAIN SITUATIONS

These treatments can help manage symptoms for some people, particularly when used alongside the foundations.



Pain relief medication
(e.g. topical or oral)



Heat or ice



Walking aids
(e.g. stick)



Knee braces or supports



Corticosteroid injections

These options may:

- ✓ Reduce pain and stiffness
- ✓ Improve comfort and function for some people
- ✓ Be more effective when combined with exercise and self-management



UNCERTAIN, LIMITED OR VARIABLE EVIDENCE

These treatments may help some people, but the evidence is less clear. They are not routinely recommended for knee osteoarthritis.



Supplements
(e.g. glucosamine, collagen)



PRP injections



Stem cell injections



Magnetic or copper products

Consider:

- ✓ Benefits are uncertain or mixed
- ✓ They are not routinely recommended
- ✓ Discuss potential benefits, risks and costs with a healthcare professional



Your plan. Your goals.

Not every treatment is right for everyone. The best approach is the one that fits your symptoms, goals and lifestyle, and helps you do the things that matter to you.

*Knowledge today.
A more active tomorrow.*

MY KNEE TODAY

 Date: _____

☐ Typical day ☐ Better than usual ☐ Worse than usual

My Pain

Average over 24 hours: ____ /10

My pain right now: ____ /10

My knee feels worse when:

My knee feels better when:

(0 = No pain; 10 = Extreme pain)

My Morning Stiffness

My usual morning stiffness: ____ /10

Time it takes to loosen up: _____ minutes

(0 = No stiffness; 10 = Extremely stiff)

How Is My Knee Affecting My Life?

For each activity below, rate how difficult it feels for you at the moment.

(0 = No difficulty; 5 = Moderate difficulty; 10 = Unable to do).

Activity	Difficulty today
 Walking for 10 minutes	____ /10
 Getting up from a chair	____ /10
 Going upstairs	____ /10
 Going downstairs	____ /10
 Getting in/out of a car	____ /10
 Putting on socks/shoes	____ /10
 Shopping	____ /10
 Gardening/housework	____ /10
An activity important to me: _____	____ /10

My Three Most Important Goals

Choose three activities you'd like to improve. Try to make your goals specific, for example: "I want to walk around the park with my family without needing to stop" or "I want to climb the stairs more comfortably and confidently". These goals will give you something meaningful to work towards.



MY GOAL - 01

I would like to be able to _____

Why does this matter to me? _____

How important is this to me? ____ /10

How confident am I that I can work towards it? ____ /10

MY GOAL - 02

I would like to be able to _____

Why does this matter to me? _____

How important is this to me? ____ /10

How confident am I that I can work towards it? ____ /10

MY GOAL - 03

I would like to be able to _____

Why does this matter to me? _____

How important is this to me? ____ /10

How confident am I that I can work towards it? ____ /10

Your programme isn't really about improving a number. It's about helping you do more of the things that matter to you.

Chapter 5: Your Progressive Exercise Programme

Build Strength. Build Confidence. Keep Moving.

The following is an example physiotherapy-designed programme.

How to Use This Programme:

- **Start at the level that feels appropriate for you.** You don't need to progress because the calendar says so.
- **Some discomfort can be acceptable.** Exercise should feel manageable rather than overwhelming.
- **Monitor how your knee responds.** Pay attention during exercise and over the following day.
- **Progress gradually.** When an exercise feels controlled and manageable, change one thing at a time.

You will work through four phases:

Phase 1 — Move & Activate

- Gentle mobility and muscle activation, primarily performed lying down.

Phase 2 — Strengthen & Load

- Introduce weight-bearing exercises and begin building functional strength.

Phase 3 — Build Capacity

- Increase resistance, repetitions, and functional challenge.

Phase 4 — Return to What Matters

- Build towards the activities and lifestyle you want to maintain long term.



PHASE 2

Strengthen & Load

Once the Phase 1 exercises feel manageable and you are ready for more challenge, you can begin introducing more weight-bearing exercises. These movements are closer to the demands of everyday activities such as standing up, squatting and climbing stairs.

Your Phase 2 programme includes:

6. Sit-to-stand
7. Supported mini squat
8. Step-up

You can also continue selected Phase 1 exercises as appropriate.

Aim for **2-3 strengthening sessions per week**.

Exercise 6: Sit-to-stand

WHY? Helps build strength for everyday activities such as getting out of a chair.		
HOW? - Sit towards the front of a sturdy chair. - Place your feet approximately hip-width apart. - Lean slightly forwards. - Push through your feet to stand. - Slowly lower yourself back into the chair.		
START WITH: 2 sets × 8-10 repetitions		
MAKE IT EASIER: Use your hands for support if needed.		
MAKE IT HARDER: Use a lower chair or hold a light weight.		
TIP: Keep your knees aligned with your feet.		

Continue Your Knee Osteoarthritis Self-Management Journey

The complete 62-page workbook gives you the education, exercises and practical tools to continue building your strength, confidence and capacity.



Ready to continue?

Get the complete workbook

www.nathalieagius.com

The Complete Knee Osteoarthritis Self-Management Workbook | Nathalie Agius, Physiotherapist

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