

# Osteoarthritis

Information for the public

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[nice.org.uk](http://nice.org.uk)

## About this information

NICE quality standards help to improve key areas of health or social care so that people are offered the best care available.

This information explains the care and support described in the NICE quality standard for osteoarthritis.

## Osteoarthritis

The quality standard for osteoarthritis is made up of 8 statements that describe high-quality care for adults with osteoarthritis. These statements set out the quality of care you should receive.

1. Adults aged 45 years or over who go to their GP with joint pain that is typical of osteoarthritis are usually diagnosed with osteoarthritis without the need for an X-ray or a scan. This is because the results of X-rays and scans do not explain symptoms or help when deciding about treatment, and will mean that people do not have unnecessary X-rays or scans.
2. Adults who have been diagnosed with osteoarthritis have an assessment in which they are asked about their pain, how they are managing on a day-to-day basis and how the condition is affecting their life overall, including their mood. This will help when deciding the best way to try to improve their symptoms and quality of life.

3. Adults with osteoarthritis agree a self-management plan with their GP or nurse that covers what they can do to help manage their condition, including improving their symptoms and quality of life. The plan should identify where they can get the support they may need to help them do this.

4. Adults with osteoarthritis are advised and encouraged by healthcare professionals to exercise, both for general fitness and to strengthen the muscles that support their affected joints, because this may help to improve their symptoms.

5. Adults with osteoarthritis who are overweight or obese are offered help to lose weight, because being overweight can make joint pain worse and losing weight should improve symptoms.

6. Adults with osteoarthritis discuss and agree (usually with their GP or practice nurse) when they should have their next review to check how well they are managing and if they need any more support. The timing of their next review will depend on how much their osteoarthritis is affecting them and how well any treatment is working.

7. Adults with osteoarthritis are given information, and are advised and supported to exercise and (if appropriate) lose weight to help with joint pain and stiffness, for at least 3 months before any referral for possible joint surgery.

8. Adults with osteoarthritis who are considering joint surgery discuss this with their healthcare professional to decide if it is right for them, and are not denied a referral because they have not met particular requirements.

## Your care

Your health and social care team should explain any treatment, care or support you should be offered so that you can decide together what is best for you. NICE has also produced advice and quality standards on [improving the experience of care for adults using the NHS](#) which you might like to read.

We also have more information on the NICE website about [using health and social care services](#).

## More information on osteoarthritis

NICE has also produced guidance (advice) on [osteoarthritis](#). The guidance was used to develop this quality standard.

## *Sources of advice and support for people with osteoarthritis, their families and carers*

- Arthritis Care, 0808 800 4050, [www.arthritiscare.org.uk](http://www.arthritiscare.org.uk)

You can also go to [NHS Choices](#) for more information about health and social care.

A number of organisations who share NICE's commitment to improving quality in this area formally support this quality standard. They may also be able to provide advice and support. For a list of these organisations see the osteoarthritis quality standard [overview](#).

NICE is not responsible for the quality or accuracy of any information or advice provided by these organisations.

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## *Accreditation*

