



Hip Osteoarthritis (Hip OA)

What is Hip Osteoarthritis (Hip OA)?

Hip OA is a condition that can affect one or both of your hip joints. It is characterised by the destruction of cartilage, leading to rough and uneven joint surfaces. Hip OA may present with pain during weight-bearing activity or pain when sleeping. The pain may vary in location and can occur at the hip joint or in the groin, thigh or buttock. The pain is often like a deep ache however can also be sharp in nature. Stiffness within the hip joint may also be present, limiting your range of movement, particularly after sustained positions.

Why does it happen?

The exact cause of osteoarthritis is unknown however several factors can contribute to the increased risk of having OA. These factors include:

- Age, OA is more common in the older population due to the gradual wear and tear of the joint over time.
- Obesity due to the increased stress placed on your weight-bearing joints
- Manual labour/sport resulting in increased wear and tear of the joint
- Previous joint injury
- Genetics, due to a defect in one of your genes that is responsible for manufacturing cartilage (protective cushion at the end of your bones)

What can a physiotherapist do?

Although there is currently no cure for hip OA your physiotherapist can assist you in managing your condition and help ease the pain.

Exercise is one of the most important and beneficial treatments for OA. It can assist with the strength, support and stability around your joints and help to reduce load through the joint. Exercise programs that the physiotherapist develops are individualized to best suit your needs. Low impact exercise is beneficial for people with hip OA. Exercise programs could involve cycling, tai chi, hydrotherapy and pilates.

The physiotherapist can also provide treatment and give you education and advice on methods to reduce the inflammation and stiffness within your hip joint. Treatment may include manual therapy, soft-tissue therapy, electrotherapy and taping for support. In particular, a pilates based program to increase the strength and stability of the muscles supporting the hip would be of increasing benefit. Often you will also have associated lower back pain. Your physiotherapist will also assess and treat this.

Pain management is an important aspect of the control of your hip OA. Your physiotherapist will work closely with your doctor and pharmaceutical provider to assist you in managing your pain.

Outcome

In the early stages of hip OA, with appropriate physiotherapy intervention and pain relief, you can effectively manage your arthritic pain so that it has little implications on your daily activity. In severe cases or when conservative treatment fails joint replacement may be necessary.