

Osteoarthritis of the Knee Clinical Care Standard

The goal of the *Osteoarthritis of the Knee Clinical Care Standard* is to support the delivery of high-quality primary care management of patients with knee osteoarthritis.

Visit www.safetyandquality.gov.au/ccs to download the clinical care standard booklet, a set of indicators to support local monitoring, and a Consumer Fact Sheet to provide to patients.

Under this clinical care standard



1 Comprehensive assessment

A patient with knee pain and other symptoms suggestive of osteoarthritis receives a comprehensive assessment that includes a detailed history of the presenting symptoms and other health conditions, a physical examination, and a psychosocial evaluation that identifies factors that may affect their quality of life and participation in their usual activities.



2 Diagnosis

A patient with knee pain and other symptoms suggestive of osteoarthritis is diagnosed as having knee osteoarthritis based on clinical assessment alone. X-rays are considered only if an alternative diagnosis is suspected (for example, insufficiency fracture, malignancy). Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) is considered only if there is suspicion of serious pathology not detected by X-ray.



3 Education and self-management

A patient with knee osteoarthritis receives education about their condition and treatments for it, and participates in the development of an individualised self-management plan that addresses both their physical and psychosocial health needs.



4 Weight loss and exercise

A patient with knee osteoarthritis is offered support to lose weight, if they are overweight or obese, and advice on exercise, tailored to their needs and preferences. The patient is encouraged to set weight and exercise goals, and is referred to services to help them achieve these, as required.



5 Medicines used to manage symptoms

A patient with knee osteoarthritis is offered medicines to manage their symptoms according to the current version of *Therapeutic Guidelines: Rheumatology* (or concordant local guidelines). This includes consideration of the patient's clinical condition and their preferences.



6 Patient review

A patient with knee osteoarthritis receives planned clinical reviews at agreed intervals, and management of the condition is adjusted for any changing needs. If the patient has worsening symptoms with severe functional impairment that persists despite the best conservative management, they are referred for specialist assessment.



7 Surgery

A patient with knee osteoarthritis who is not responding to conservative management is offered timely joint-conserving or joint replacement surgery, depending on their fitness for surgery and preferences. The patient receives information about the procedure to inform their treatment decision. Arthroscopic procedures are not effective treatments for knee osteoarthritis, and therefore should only be offered if the patient has true mechanical locking or another appropriate indication for these procedures.

Osteoarthritis of the Knee

Osteoarthritis is one of the most common chronic joint conditions in Australia. It can cause pain, loss of mobility and reduced quality of life.

Knee osteoarthritis is a major form of the condition and the main reason for knee replacement surgery, with excess weight being a key risk factor.

About 2.1 million
Australians are
estimated to have
osteoarthritis

It is the fourth most
common reason
people visit GPs



30% of people
aged 65 or older
report some
joint symptoms

\$1.6 billion spent on
treating osteoarthritis
per year

Effective management in primary care can reduce the burden of knee osteoarthritis on patients and the healthcare system



Provide a comprehensive
clinical assessment



Educate the patient and develop
a self-management plan



Include non-surgical treatments:
weight loss, exercise,
pain management



Monitor the patient through
planned clinical reviews



Refer the patient to a surgeon or rheumatologist if
conservative management no longer works

For more information on the *Osteoarthritis of the Knee*
Clinical Care Standard go to www.safetyandquality.gov.au/ccs