



Osteoarthritis (OA): Promoting wise healthcare

Healthcare is often described as 'high value' or 'low value'¹. Both are important to know about so you can get the right care, not care that is risky or has little benefit.

High value care is	Low value care is
✓ Effective – evidence suggests that it works to produce a positive effect ✓ Safe – there is low risk of harm ✓ Cost effective – despite cost, the care provides benefit relative to alternative options	✗ Ineffective – evidence suggests that the care will provide no or very little benefit ✗ Potentially harmful – the risk of harm is greater than any likely benefit ✗ Not cost effective – since the care is unlikely to provide benefit, the cost associated with care delivery could be used on other care options

High value care for OA:

- ✓ A diagnosis of osteoarthritis that is based on a thorough clinical assessment, rather than on x-rays, scans (CT/MRI) or other tests.
- ✓ A personalised management plan for you that focuses on:
 - Accurate information about osteoarthritis and what you can do to stay active
 - How to safely exercise and increase your physical activity
 - A guide to types of exercise (such as muscle strengthening, aerobic exercise), how often and how much ("dose"), and how to manage if pain increases
 - Weight loss support for people who are overweight or obese
- ✓ If you have severe symptoms, and have actively managed your osteoarthritis using these high value care approaches, a timely referral for consideration of surgery may be required. This allows you to discuss your care with a surgeon.

¹ Scott IA, Duckett SJ In search of professional consensus in defining and reducing low-value care
Med J Aust 2015; 203 (4): 179-181. || doi: 10.5694/mja14.01664



Low value care for OA:

- ✗ Relying mainly on medications and other passive treatments (things being done to you)
- ✗ Knee arthroscopic surgery (commonly called 'key hole' surgery)
- ✗ Use of opioid medications (these have a significant risk of harm).
- ✗ Use of other treatments that do not have evidence of benefit. These include: acupuncture, ultrasound therapy, shockwave therapy, laser therapy, cold therapy, orthopaedic footwear, insoles and knee braces, kinesio taping, glucosamine, stem cell therapy and platelet rich plasma (PRP) therapy.

Important questions to ask your health professional

Here are [5 important questions](#) (available in 12 different languages) from the [Choosing Wisely](#) initiative. These are the recommended questions that you should ask your health professional about your osteoarthritis pain to help you decide what the right care is for you.

5 important question to ask your health professional(s)

1. Do I really need this test, treatment or procedure?
2. What are the risks?
3. Are there simpler, safer options?
4. What happens if I don't do anything?
5. What are the costs?