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Top tips to keep knees in good working order

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As we age, our joints naturally go through wear and tear, and for lots of people over 50, the knees are often the first to feel the strain.



Whether it's due to past injuries, arthritis or simply decades of daily use, maintaining strong, pain-free knees becomes essential for staying mobile and independent.

These practical and expertbacked tips will help support knee health into your 50s and beyond...

Maintain a healthy weight

"The top tip no one wants to hear is that you have to make sure that you are of normal weight," says Neil Bradbury, orthopaedic surgeon and knee specialist at Sulis Hospital in Bath. "The whole of the body is designed to take a certain amount of weight and if you carry more weight, you wear out your joints more quickly."

Stay active

"It's important to remember that the knee is part of the body, and the body needs to be looked after," says Neil. "So, everybody needs to do enough exercise every week to keep themselves healthy.

Cycling or swimming are particularly good."

Adapt the exercise you're doing

"As we age, the type of exercise we do may have to change," says Neil. "If someone has slightly sore knees and are a runner, one of the things I've frequently said is, 'maybe you should think about doing something less weightbearing, like cross training, cycling or swimming'."

Strengthen your muscles

Retaining strength is very important "because the muscles help support the joint," says Neil.

"So, strength training and weight training are good for this. That doesn't mean going to a gym and lifting huge weights, just doing some simple exercises that keep your knees strong in terms of your muscular power is good."

Wear suitable footwear

"Ensure that you have comfortable footwear that fits well," stresses Matt Harrison, first contact physiotherapy lead at Homerton Healthcare Trust.

"Your footwear provides that foundation to provide support for your knee that sits above."

It's also crucial to ensure you're wearing the right shoes when you exercise.

“If you’re a runner, change your shoes regularly and make sure that you don’t lose the sponginess from the shoes,” says Neil.

“If you’re doing a lot of miles, every six months or so you need to get your shoes changed. Go somewhere where they are able to analyse your running style so that you have shoes that are specific for you and take into account the alignment of your feet.”

Do regular knee exercises

“Typically using the knee through its range of movements (bending and straightening, leg raises, calf raises etc) and load-based exercises [where you do these exercises and gradually add weight] can help to strengthen the knee,” recommends Matt.

“Squatting-based exercises like standing and sitting from a chair, or gym-based squats are also very good.”

Listen to your body and build up intensity slowly

“It’s about gradually building up anything that you do slowly,” says Matt. “Either work on intensity of exercise [gradually increasing the weight being used] or the volume [how long you do an activity for].

“Tasks like ascending and descending stairs are so important within our lives, so it’s important to keep active with these and you can do this at home. But remember, it is also OK to rest while doing these tasks.”

Seek specialist advice

“Knee specialists offer a huge variety of treatments, from just talking to the patient and explaining the situation, all the way up through to major surgery,” says Neil. “We also talk through things like injection therapy and advice about exercise.”