Non-Surgical Management of Hip & Knee Osteoarthritis

Last updated January 30, 2023

Objective

This patient summary means to discuss key recommendations from the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Department of Defense, for non-surgical management of hip and knee osteoarthritis. This patient summary is limited to adults 18 years of age and older and should not be used as a reference for children.

FEEDBACK

Overview

- Osteoarthritis describes a common, progressive degeneration of joints.
- Osteoarthritis is generally considered a wear and tear disease from overuse, but there also appears to be some genetic influence.
- Symptoms include pain and limitation of function.
- This patient summary focuses on the non-surgical management of osteoarthritis in the hips and knees.

Diagnosis

- Diagnosis is usually clear from your history and an examination of the joints affected.
  - Consequently, imaging is rarely needed unless surgery is being considered.

Treatment

- The VA suggests a self-management program including exercise, weight loss and, for the knee, bracing.
  - Physical therapy is included in a comprehensive management program.
- The VA recommends topical non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs and suggests topical capsaicin for knee pain.
- The VA suggests acetaminophen and/or oral non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs for hip or knee pain.
  - An alternative is duloxetine.
- For persistent hip or knee pain, the VA suggests:
  - cortisone injection (image-guided for the hip)
  - **2nd choice:** viscosupplementation injection(s) for the knee (an artificial substitute for joint fluid)
- There is insufficient evidence for benefits from:
  - nutritional supplements
  - massage
  - light touch
  - meditation
  - tai chi
  - yoga
  - transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation

Disclaimer

The information in this patient summary should not be used as a substitute for professional medical care or advice. Contact a health care provider if you have questions about your health.

Abbreviations

- **VA**: Veterans Administration

Source Citation

Krishnamurthy A, Lang AE, Pangarkar S, Edison J, Cody J, Sall J. Synopsis of the 2020 US Department of Veterans Affairs/US Department of Defense Clinical Practice Guideline: The Non-Surgical Management of Hip and Knee Osteoarthritis. *Mayo Clin Proc.* 2021 Sep;96(9):2435-2447. doi: 10.1016/j.mayocp.2021.03.017. PMID: 34481599.

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