

MRI for Knee and Hip – when is it appropriate?

Information for Patients

When do MRI exams make sense?

If you are 40 years of age or older and one or more of the following apply to you, an MRI may be required:

- MRI recommended on a previous imaging report
- Previous knee or hip surgery
- Suspected infection
- Suspected tumour
- Loss of bone tissue (Osteonecrosis)
- Fixed/locked knee
- You have had a weight-bearing x-ray in the past 6 months showing mild or no evidence of osteoarthritis (OA)

If you are under the age of 40 and a clinician has referred you for an MRI, it is considered appropriate.

When is it not appropriate?

If none of the criteria listed apply to you, an MRI is not recommended. Your best approach would be to follow the self-care measures described on the right.

Often patients with moderate to severe OA wish to have an MRI as they are in pain and want a solution; however, **an MRI for knee/hip OA is not recommended.** If you have OA, you may have:

- Joint pain and aches
- Morning stiffness lasting less than 30 minutes
- Reduced range of motion
- Swelling around the joints

The diagnosis of OA can be made based on your history, a physical exam and an X-ray.

When should I go back to my health care provider?

If your pain is the same or worse after the initial visit, you should go back to your referring clinician in 2-4 weeks for a reassessment.

What you can do to manage your pain

Here are some common ways of managing your knee and hip pain. Book an appointment with your doctor or nurse practitioner to set up a treatment plan.

1. Weight management

Losing weight may reduce your pain, make you more comfortable and reduce the swelling around your joints.

2. Physical activity

Joint-friendly aerobic exercise, such as walking, swimming and cycling can improve your pain and quality of life while reducing the risk of injury. Also consider strengthening muscles around the hips and knees to stabilize your joints and improve your flexibility.

3. Thermotherapy

Try heating and cooling before activities to help loosen the joints.

4. Walking aids and supportive devices

Choose appropriate and supportive footwear to help reduce stress to your joints. A knee brace can help with stability, reduce stress on the knee and give you more confidence.

5. Over-the-counter medications

Medication can help manage the pain. Please consult your doctor, nurse practitioner and/or pharmacist for more information regarding your options.

October 2018