

Steps to curb the pain

The eight steps to effective pain management for osteoarthritis patients.

OSTEARTHRTIS (OA) is the most common joint condition in the world. It mainly affects the knees, hips and spine, causing joint pain, tenderness and limited movement.

In OA the progressive loss of cartilage (which helps to absorb the pressure on joints) at the end of the bones, gives rise to pain and disability, resulting in stiffness and a loss in mobility.

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), 80% of patients with OA have some degree of limitation of movement, and 25% cannot perform their major daily activities of life. The condition mostly affects older people, those with previous joint injuries due to trauma, the obese as well as people who are inactive.

To date, there is no known cure for OA. However, a patient can reduce the effect of OA by managing pain and conducting light exercises as it helps to strengthen muscles around the joints, control weight and delay the need for surgery.

Realising the importance of pain management and the power of exercise, Panadol Extend, in association with the Arthritis Foundation of Malaysia (AFM) and the

Malaysian Physiotherapy Association (MPA), is helping patients to manage OA with the launch of the Panadol Extend Activ8 Programme, an 8-Step programme offering information and tips on how to manage pain so you can keep active with OA.

Obtainable free via health practitioners, the unique programme consists of an education booklet and CD, and it helps patients to deal with OA in a holistic manner.

"The programme is helping patients with OA to develop a positive outlook by approaching the management of OA in a holistic manner. With effective pain management comprising exercise and the proper use of pain relievers ... it will help patients to exercise better and keep their joints healthy; ultimately improve a person's quality of life," said Yung Yuit Meng, Head of Marketing, Futures, GlaxoSmithKline Consumer Healthcare (GSK).

Paracetamol is recommended by medical associations around the world as an effective first choice for the relief of OA pain such as knee pain as well as muscular aches such as backache.

The most common form of OA in Malaysia is knee OA, affecting 40% of people over the age of 70 years. In managing OA, patients need to know the importance of keeping active through strengthening and stretching exercises, for better pain control.

Professor and Senior Consultant from the Department of Primary Care Medicine in University of Malaya, Prof Datin Dr Chia Yook



Pain management is essential for osteoarthritis sufferers, hence the launch of the 8-Step programme offering information and tips on how to manage pain so you can still keep active. - Los Angeles Times

Chin, said: "Besides pain relievers, exercise is also very important in relieving pain. It's important to stay active as this helps to strengthen your joint and increase your mobility. If necessary, consider taking paracetamol with sustained-release formulation that can provide fast onset in pain relief, which lasts up to eight hours and compliance is better as it is taken three times a day.

"Most patients with OA are elderly with many co-morbid illnesses and therefore are on many types of medication. Hence the choice of pain reliever is of utmost importance, and guidelines from reputable organisations have recommended the use of simple analgesics like paracetamol as first line drug

of choice. And now, coupled with the programme, OA patients are able to exercise on their own and keep active in the comfort of their home," added Prof Datin Dr Chia.

OA can be quite debilitating, making the easiest of movement like climbing the stairs excruciatingly painful. However, with simple exercises and pain reliever like paracetamol to manage pain, OA patients can lead a better life.

"With regular exercises, muscles grow stronger around the OA joint. It also keeps your joints mobile and reduces joint pain thus increases ability to perform daily tasks," said Dr Muhaini Othman, President of Malaysian Society of Rheumatology.