

Ask the Experts – How to make a painful knee better

Mind Your Body, The Straits Times (Thursday, 31 December 2009)

Q: About a month ago, I began to have pain in my right knee. The doctor I consulted removed fluid from the knee. He said the pain was due to arthritis and gave me joint inflammation arthritis medication - Analcalm, Apopiroxicam and Tolpa.

Is the pain due to arthritis? How can I improve the situation with diet or exercise?

A: Arthritis means inflammation or damage involving a joint. Its symptoms include pain and swelling of the joint, as well as warmth and stiffness.

The most common cause of knee arthritis is degeneration or wear and tear. This type of arthritis is called osteoarthritis.

Knee arthritis can also be caused by gout when uric acid crystals form in the joint and cause inflammation. It can also occur as a result of infection and is called septic arthritis.

In most cases, your doctor will make the diagnosis after reviewing your history and examining you. Further tests, such as X-rays and blood tests, may also be needed. Sometimes, the fluid in the knee joint has to be removed for laboratory testing.

The treatment of knee arthritis depends on the underlying cause. In your case, the doctor has probably diagnosed osteoarthritis. The initial treatment of osteoarthritis consists of anti-inflammatory medication, such as the ones you were prescribed.

The removal of excess fluid from the knee joint can sometimes help to relieve symptoms.

General aerobic and specific thigh muscle strengthening exercises are beneficial. Other helpful measures include the use of walking aids, maintaining a balanced diet and controlling your weight.

If these general measures do not relieve your symptoms, an orthopaedic specialist's review would help to determine if surgery is necessary.

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