ATKINS
PHYSIOTHERAPY
CONSULTANTS

ARTHRITIS OF THE KNEE

Different forms of arthritis can affect the knee joint: osteoarthritis, inflammatory arthritis or traumatic arthritis. All of them will present with a particular pattern of pain and stiffness and it will be hard to bend and fully straighten the knee. Swelling may be present according to the degree of inflammation in the joint.

Physiotherapy can help with traumatic arthritis (that is usually associated with ligament injury) when any ligamentous damage will be treated with a specific massage technique called frictions before encouraging active movement in the knee to keep the ligament free. Massage, ice and electrotherapy can be used to reduce swelling and pain. If the problem has been there for over six weeks the ligament will need to be treated with manipulation to restore normal movement.

In osteoarthritis there may be persistent thickened swelling of the joint and this can be treated with deep tissue massage and electrotherapy. Mobilisations and stretching techniques will be applied with a home exercise programme to increase muscle strength and movement.

An anti-inflammatory steroid injection is more appropriate for the knee with inflammatory arthritis although advice on maintaining muscle strength and movement within the pain free range is appropriate as aftercare.