

# Early knee arthritis symptoms first felt when using stairs

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People who suffer from knee pain when using the stairs may be experiencing the early symptoms of osteoarthritis, according to a new University of Leeds study.

The research, published in the medical journal *Arthritis Care & Research*, aimed to investigate which patient-reported activities are first associated with [knee pain](#), in order to improve early detection of [osteoarthritis](#) and so increase the chances of people seeking effective treatment.

Philip Conaghan, Professor of Musculoskeletal Medicine in the School of Medicine, led the study. He said: "At present we have little concept of 'early' osteoarthritis and often only see people when they have significant longstanding pain and loss of function. This [research](#) is vital to understanding early symptoms of knee osteoarthritis.

"Knowing this will help us intervene earlier, perhaps leading to more effective ways of treating this very painful condition."

For this study, the team looked at the cases of 4,673 people who have, or are at high risk of, osteoarthritis. Participants completed annual surveys for up to seven years in order to help the researchers track the emergence of pain during different activities over a long-term period.

The study revealed that using [stairs](#) was the first weight-bearing task in which people noticed pain.

This was followed by pain emerging during walking, standing, lying or sitting and then finally when resting in bed.

**More information:** "Toward a clinical definition of early osteoarthritis: onset of patient-reported knee pain begins on stairs. Data from the osteoarthritis initiative." *Arthritis Care Res* (Hoboken). 2015 Jan;67(1):40-7. [DOI: 10.1002/acr.22418](https://doi.org/10.1002/acr.22418).

Provided by University of Leeds

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