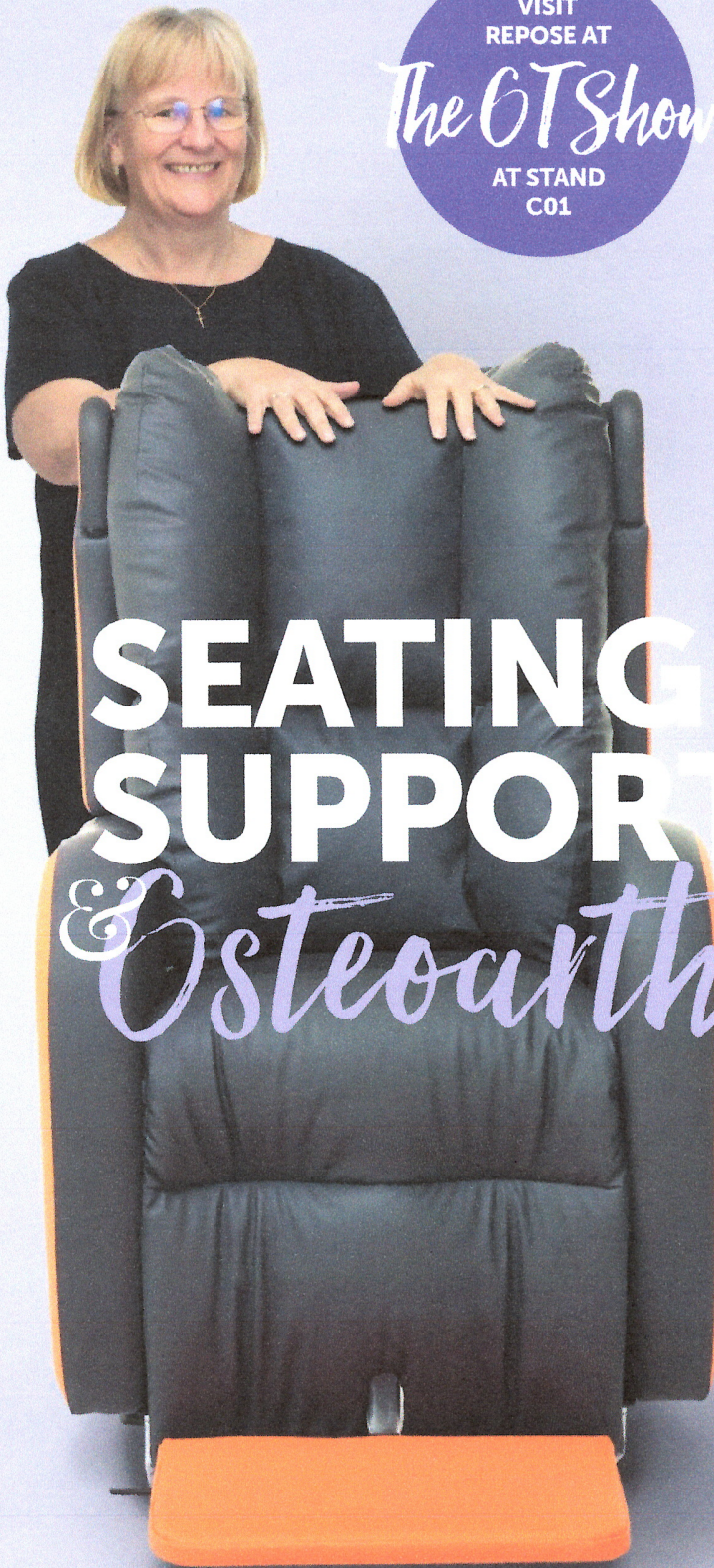


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SEATING SUPPORT

& Osteoarthritis

Bespoke specialist seating company, Repose and OT, Kate Sheehan explore the process of choosing the correct seating to support a patient with osteoarthritis.

Words by Kate Sheehan, Repose Furniture

We all spend a lot of time sitting in a chair, whether it's at work, at home or during recreational activities. While it is important for all of us that we sit in a chair that allows us to sit comfortably for long periods of time, it is of vital importance for someone living with a condition such as osteoarthritis to have the correct supportive seating solution.

Osteoarthritis is a common degenerative condition that causes pain and inflammation in a joint.

In the UK there are over 8 million people who have osteoarthritis. It mainly affects those over the age of 45 however, it can occur at any age because of an injury or another joint-related condition. In osteoarthritis, the connective tissue that provides a cushion in the joint space between the bones gradually erodes, causing pain, inflammation and a build up of fluid in the joints. Because there is a reduced barrier between the bones in the joint, they begin to rub together which can lead to further pain and swelling. It can also then lead to swelling and the formation of bony growths on the edge of the bones and therefore deforming the joint. The joints that are most commonly affected are those in the hips, knees and spine but it can occur in other joints in the body also.

Every person with osteoarthritis will have a different experience of the condition and the impact on ►

Seating solution

“If we sit in a chair that is the wrong height, the pressure on the lower limb joints and spine can increase.”

them, but the most common symptoms that people experience include pain, stiffness in the affected joints, muscle weakness, swelling around the joints, reduced range of motion, and a grinding or grating of the joint when it moves. Over time these symptoms can lead to a reduced ability to use the joint as you want to.

If the joints aren't working as well as they should be, choosing and using seating that promotes comfort, good posture and ease of use becomes very important.

When seated pressure is being placed throughout our body, in the hips, spine, through the legs and even in our arms and shoulders. If we sit in a chair that is the wrong height, the pressure on the lower limb joints and spine can increase. When standing up from a chair you'll place pressure through your feet, knees, hips, spine and, if you are using armrests to help get up, you'll also be putting pressure through

the shoulders, elbows and hands. If you've already got deteriorating and painful joints because of osteoarthritis the last thing you want to do is cause further unnecessary strain and damage to the joint. Therefore, it's critical to really think about what you are using a chair for, how and when you plan to use it and how you are going to get out of it.

As osteoarthritis is a degenerative condition, people living with it need to find ways to complete daily living tasks that put as little unnecessary strain on their joints as possible. There are various ways to do this including learning different techniques, using supportive equipment and planning activities carefully. Having a good quality and supportive chair can not only provide good comfort and

Osteoarthritis SEATING CHECKLIST

- Is the seat comfortable?
- Does it allow the user to sit in a position that promotes good posture?
- Does it reduce any pressure damage from sitting for prolonged periods?
- Does it enable them to carry out normal activities whilst in a seated position?
- Does it allow movement in and out of the chair as easily as possible?

support, but can enable you to complete more activities, with less strain on your joints and less pain. And surely that is something that is worth investing in. ■

■ More about Repose

Repose will be showcasing their range of bespoke seating solutions on stand C01 at The OT Show.

reposefurniture.co.uk

THINGS TO consider...

1 HEIGHT

The height of the chair must allow them to sit with their feet flat on the floor. If the chair is too low, it will put unnecessary pressure on the hip and knee joints. Too high and it can put pressure on the spine and leave the legs unsupported.

2 WIDTH

The seat width needs to provide enough support to prevent slumping to either side of the chair as this can cause unnecessary pressure on joints on one side of the body.

3 DEPTH

The seat depth should be long enough to support the upper part of the legs whilst allowing your back to rest comfortably on the backrest. If the seat is too long they are likely to slouch in the chair to get their feet on the floor, which puts extra pressure on the lower spine.

4 THE ARMS

The arms should be at a suitable height to enable a resting position that does not push the shoulders upwards. The arms should also be of a suitable style and height so that they can use them to support their body weight when getting in or out of the chair.

5 RISING FUNCTION

Think about if a rising function is beneficial as this can take a considerable amount of strain away from the joints as the mechanics of the chair will assist when getting in and out of the chair.

6 MATERIAL

Think about the material used in the chair and the quality of this. Having materials in the seat cushion, backrest and arms that are firm and supportive are likely to be more beneficial than having soft materials that won't support the body.