

# Arthritis

## What is arthritis?

Arthritis is an inflammation of the joints, which can cause pain and difficulty when you move around. Other possible effects of arthritis are loss of grip and strength. Most people find that they have 'good days and bad days'. In the UK there are around 10 million people who have arthritis and it is the single biggest cause of physical disability.

There are over 200 different types of arthritis. The most common types are:

- **Osteoarthritis** this condition usually develops gradually and affects several different joints; most commonly the hands, knees, hips, feet and spine. It occurs when the cartilage becomes thin and weakened. After a number of years the disease may 'settle' and eventually the joints may become less painful and problematic.
- **Rheumatoid arthritis** this occurs when joints and tendons become inflamed. Symptoms include: swelling of the small joints of hands or feet; stiffness in joints for at least 30 minutes in the morning; pain on squeezing across hands or feet . It may be associated with Reynaud's disease or scleroderma.
- **Ankylosing Spondylitis** this is another form of inflammatory arthritis, which begins by affecting the joints in the lower back, which become inflamed and stiff. It is most common amongst younger men.
- **Gout** this condition is when crystals build up in the body and cause the joints to become very painful. Gout most commonly affects the joints at the base of the big toe, but may also affect other joints such as the ankles, knees, hands, wrists or elbows. Once you receive treatment, the condition improves quickly.

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## Ways to help prevent arthritis or improve your existing condition

There are several ways that you can help to prevent or reduce the severity of arthritis:

- **Control your weight** being overweight increases the pressure on your joints. Maintaining a healthy weight will help to ease this pressure and make your joints less painful.
- **Exercise** weight-bearing exercise, such as walking, can help to prevent osteoarthritis by increasing the strength of the muscles that support your joints.
- **Give up smoking** – this has been identified as a risk factor more recently
- **Good posture** having a good posture can help to strengthen your joint structures and prevent osteoarthritis.
- **Equipment and adaptations** there is a wide range of equipment available to help make your daily tasks easier, such as jar openers or bath seats. For more information contact the **Adult**

### Social CarePoint

- **Foot care** – Wearing well-cushioned footwear with lace-up fastenings and adjustable straps can sometimes relieve the pain and discomfort in your feet. Ask your chiropodist for advice; they may be able to recommend some special ‘shock absorbing’ insoles or custom-made inlays.
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## Local help and information

The following organisations can provide you with more information about arthritis and about how you can access help and support:

**Tyneside Integrated Musculoskeletal Services (TIMS)** offers self-care and fast access to expert opinion, diagnosis and treatment of a variety of muscle, joint and soft tissue conditions and chronic pain. Helping you to manage and treat some of the conditions that cause aches and pains in your own home. This includes arthritis, back, neck, knee, hip, ankle, elbow, persistent pain and health in pregnancy. They provide:

- advice and information
- self help information on their website
- option to make a self referral to the service for more support if needed
- telephone, video and face to face consultations after referral is made
- ESCAPE – Pain rehabilitation programme to help people manage their hip and knee pain through education and exercise. You can attend 10 to 12 sessions over 6 weeks across Gateshead and Newcastle or virtual classes

TIMS is a partnership between Gateshead Health NHS Foundation Trust and The Newcastle Upon Tyne Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust.

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**Versus Arthritis** provide information and advice for people who have arthritis. They have a national free, confidential helpline to provide information, emotional and practical support.

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**National Rheumatoid Arthritis Society** offer information and advice as well as a local support group.

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## Other useful information

- **National Rheumatoid Arthritis Society**
- **Healthtalk.org has information on treatments and symptoms of arthritis**
- **For information and guidance on improving your home to meet your needs better** please visit the **Housing section** of the **Information NOW website**.
- **NHS 111** is NHS telephone service you can call 111 when you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency. NHS 111 is a fast and easy way to get the right help, whatever the time.
- **NHS.UK** is a website providing health and medicines information and you can search for local services.

- **[Living Made Easy](#)** has product catalogues that may help you with your daily living concerns, including: cutlery, garden tools and getting in and out of the bath.
- **[The Patient Information Centre](#)** offers a range of health related information including:
  - medical conditions
  - procedures and treatments
  - details about self help and support groups
  - information about complaints procedures
  - copies of leaflets

**Please note** – The content on this website is provided for general information only, and should not be treated as a substitute for the medical advice of your own doctor or any other health care professional. If you are feeling unwell, make an appointment to see your GP or contact **[NHS 111](#)**. In an emergency, dial **999**.

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## Useful Organisations

### Patient Information Centre – Cumbria, Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust (CNTW)

**Website:** [www.cntw.nhs.uk](http://www.cntw.nhs.uk)

**Telephone:** 0191 246 7288

**Address:** St Nicholas Hospital, NE3 3XT

### Adult Social CarePoint at Newcastle City Council

**Email:** [ASCP@newcastle.gov.uk](mailto:ASCP@newcastle.gov.uk)

**Website:** <http://www.newcastle.gov.uk/AdultSocialCare>

**Telephone:** 0191 278 7878

**Address:** Adult Social CarePoint Newcastle City Council, NE4 9LU

### Disabled Living Foundation (DLF)

**Email:** [info@dlf.org.uk](mailto:info@dlf.org.uk)

**Website:** <http://www.livingmadeeasy.org.uk/>

**Telephone:** 0207 289 6111

**Address:** Shaw Trust, B69 2DG

## **Newcastle Libraries**

**Email:** [information@newcastle.gov.uk](mailto:information@newcastle.gov.uk)

**Website:** [www.newcastle.gov.uk/leisure-libraries-and-tourism/libraries](http://www.newcastle.gov.uk/leisure-libraries-and-tourism/libraries)

**Telephone:** 0191 278 7878

**Address:** Newcastle City Library, NE1 8AX

## **healthtalk.org**

**Email:** [info@healthtalkonline.org](mailto:info@healthtalkonline.org)

**Website:** [www.healthtalk.org](http://www.healthtalk.org)

**Telephone:** 0191 278 7878

## **National Rheumatoid Arthritis Society (NRAS)**

**Email:** [helpline@nras.org.uk](mailto:helpline@nras.org.uk)

**Website:** [www.nras.org.uk](http://www.nras.org.uk)

**Telephone:** 01628 823 524

**Address:** 4 The Switchback, SL6 7RJ

## **NHS 111**

**Website:** [www.nhs.uk/111](http://www.nhs.uk/111)

**Telephone:** 01628 823 524

## **Arthritis Action**

**Email:** [info@arthritisaction.org.uk](mailto:info@arthritisaction.org.uk)

**Website:** <https://www.arthritisaction.org.uk/>

**Telephone:** 0203 781 7120

**Address:** 56 Buckingham Gate, SW1E 6AE

## Versus Arthritis

**Email:** [enquiries@arthritisresearchuk.org](mailto:enquiries@arthritisresearchuk.org)

**Website:** <https://www.versusarthritis.org/>

**Telephone:** 0300 790 0400

**Address:** Copeman House, S41 7TD

## Tyneside Integrated Musculoskeletal Services (TIMS)

**Email:** [nuth.tims@nhs.net](mailto:nuth.tims@nhs.net)

**Website:** <https://www.tims.nhs.uk/>

**Telephone:** 0191 445 2643

**Address:** Royal Victoria Infirmary (RVI), NE1 4LP

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## Related Articles

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[Introduction to Complementary Therapies](#)

[Acupuncture](#)

[Healthy eating and drinking](#)

[Podiatrists \(or Chiropodists\)](#)

[Chronic pain](#)