

# WHAT IS ARTHRITIS?

**Arthritis is defined as an acute or chronic joint inflammation.** Symptoms can include pain, swelling, stiffness, and redness which may contribute to reduced function and dexterity. Arthritis isn't a single condition; there are many different types.

**It can affect people of all ages and physical fitness** – including children, teenagers, and athletes. Some forms of arthritis are more common in older people.

Whatever specific type of arthritis you have, **remaining physically active and choosing healthy lifestyle behaviours** will help you stay mobile and able to participate in activities that are meaningful to you.

Arthritis can make life difficult by reducing mobility and making everyday activities harder to do. It can affect people's ability to work and participate in social and leisure activities. Arthritis is commonly associated with depression or anxiety.

**The symptoms of arthritis can vary from week to week, and even from day to day. However, with the right treatment and approach you can manage your symptoms and live well.**



## Types of arthritis

There are many different types of arthritis. Some of the most common include:



osteoarthritis



gout



rheumatoid arthritis



juvenile idiopathic arthritis (JIA)



spondyloarthritis (including axial spondyloarthritis and psoriatic arthritis)

## Symptoms of arthritis

**Arthritis affects people in different ways and each condition will have specific symptoms. However, some common joint symptoms are:**

- joint pain
- stiffness (particularly early morning)
- inflammation (swelling)
- warm or red skin over the affected joint
- weakness and loss of muscle mass



Certain types of arthritis can have symptoms not directly related to your joints:

- widespread pain
- extreme fatigue
- scaly, itchy skin (psoriasis)
- changes to finger or toe nails
- rashes
- fever
- weight loss
- symptoms that affect other body systems, including eyes, heart, lungs and nerves



## How physiotherapy can help

It's important to stay active and keep moving when you have arthritis. **Physiotherapists are part of a multidisciplinary team that can help you manage your arthritis.** They will be able to assess your condition and abilities and guide you on how to keep active and help manage your symptoms. A physiotherapist can work with you and your other health care providers to co-develop a tailored management plan to help you get back to what's important to you. Strategies might include:

- devising an **exercise programme** tailored to your needs
- building your **strength, stamina, mobility,** and **activity** levels
- helping you find the balance between **rest and activity**
- helping you identify helpful **lifestyle choices**
- supporting you to develop skills to **manage pain, swelling, and stiffness**
- helping you **modify activities** at work and home
- **assess you holistically** and help you **access care from other professionals**, such as medical specialists, psychologists, occupational therapists and others



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