

REHABILITATION AT HOME

THE PHYSIO
ROOM

Cheltenham Dr

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Understanding Arthritis.

Most people experience joint pain at some point in their lives, and many will assume that their joint pain is arthritis-related, especially as they get older. But what is arthritis? How do medical professionals determine if the condition of "joint pain" is truly arthritis? You may be surprised to learn that there are multiple types of arthritis with different symptoms, causes and treatments. Below we describe four of the most common types.

1. **Osteoarthritis** is defined as the degeneration of the cartilage and underlying bone of joints due to abnormal wear and tear. This leads to pain, stiffness, formation of bony spurs and clicking or grating sensations. Symptoms occur most often in the lower back, hips, knees and even the hands.

While osteoarthritis and degeneration will occur in most people as they grow older, it can be made worse by poor posture, increased weight, abnormal biomechanics and poor nutrition. Doctors can diagnose most cases of osteoarthritis based on symptom history, and may request X-rays for confirmation. Osteoarthritis is a degenerative condition, meaning it will become progressively worse over time.

2. **Rheumatoid arthritis** belongs to the autoimmune classification of diseases, which is where the immune system becomes confused and attacks normal tissues in the body. The body mistakenly mounts an inflammatory reaction around the joint capsule, which over time leads to destruction and deformity.

Usually many joints are affected, particularly small joints in the hands and feet and around the lower back. While it is characterized by periods of exacerbation and relief, ultimately this is a progressive disease that will become worse over time.

With this type of arthritis the pain may actually get worse as you rest due to the build-up of inflammation. Blood tests and x-rays can help doctors to diagnose the condition, and treatment by a rheumatologist is central to management.

3. **Gout** is caused by excess build-up of uric acid within the blood stream. The uric acid forms urate crystals, which accumulate within the joint spaces, causing pain and inflammation. Excess uric acid is associated with a diet rich in meat, seafood, fructose and alcohol, as well as other factors including obesity, metabolic medical conditions, family history, and increased age. Historically known as "Rich man's disease", gout is also associated with kidney stones and management includes changing your diet to lower uric acid levels.

4. **Psoriatic arthritis** is an arthritis that visibly affects the skin as well as underlying joints. People tend to report symptoms such as red, white or silvery patches of dry skin, pain or discomfort in the skin, or pain in the underlying joints. The dry skin may appear on the knees, elbows, scalp, hands and feet, or on the spine. Factors that can make the symptoms of psoriasis worse include stress or anxiety, medications, exposure to excessive sunlight, smoking and alcohol, or injury to the skin.

If you suffer from arthritis, contact your GP and friendly physio for advice and proper assessment. They will help to guide your exercise journey and assist with other pain management strategies, helping to keep you active and healthy. Activities such as hydrotherapy, Pilates, and stretching have their place in maintaining correct posture and strengthening muscles appropriately to protect the body in areas of pain. **The above advice does not take the place of proper medical consultation. If you think you may have an arthritic condition, it is advisable to seek professional medical advice for the correct treatment.**

BRAIN TEASER



I am the first on Earth

The second in Heaven

I appear two times in a week

You can only see me once in a year

Although I am in the middle of the sea

What am I?



10 Reasons To Keep Moving

1. Exercise boosts your brainpower
2. Movement relieves stress throughout the body
3. Exercising regularly improves energy levels
4. Fitness can be easy to fit into your day
5. Fitness can help build friendships
6. Exercising helps ward off diseases
7. Exercising improves your heart's efficiency
8. Exercising regularly improves sport performance
9. Weight loss is not the most important fitness goal
10. Exercising keeps your muscles and joints healthy

Ankylosing Spondylitis

What is Ankylosing Spondylitis?

Ankylosing Spondylitis, a type of inflammatory arthritis, causes inflammation and pain in the spinal column as well as other joints in the body. The classic marker of Ankylosing Spondylitis is involvement of the sacroiliac joints, which are large joints connecting the pelvic bones to the sacrum in the lower back.

In many cases of Ankylosing Spondylitis, inflammation within the spinal column can cause new bone to begin forming between the vertebrae. Vertebrae are the individual bones that compose the spinal column. This leads the vertebrae to fuse in various areas, typically fusing the spine in flexed forward, immobile postures.

As Ankylosing Spondylitis progresses, other areas of the body may be affected. These areas include the smaller joints within the hands and feet, as well as the ribs and shoulders. In some instances, the disease can affect other systems of the body such as the skin, lungs and eyes.

The cause of Ankylosing Spondylitis is not clear, however there are markers and predisposing factors that may contribute to the development of the condition.

Genetics, environment and frequent gastrointestinal infections are among the pre-disposing factors. Men are more commonly affected than women and diagnosis tends to occur between the ages of 17 and 45 years.

What are the signs and symptoms?

Back pain and stiffness are the two most common symptoms of Ankylosing Spondylitis. Other symptoms include neck and buttock pain, as well as pain in the smaller joints of the hands and feet. Tendons and ligaments may also be affected.

Symptoms tend to be worse following periods of rest, and better following periods of activity. It is common for people to experience "flare-ups" and "remissions" of symptoms.

Severity of disease is patient-dependent. Some people with Ankylosing Spondylitis may experience discomfort in the spine from time to time, while others experience severe and debilitating symptoms at frequent intervals with minimal time in remission from symptoms.

Many people with ankylosing spondylitis do not seek medication attention, especially if the symptoms are mild. In these cases, the disease is not diagnosed until it has progressed, leading to increased pain and disability for the patient.

How can physio help?

Ankylosing Spondylitis responds well to physical activity. Your physiotherapist will assess your spinal movement and posture as well as strength and overall movement ability. They will assist you with performing appropriate stretches and strengthening exercises to maintain your posture, spinal strength and mobility. If your hands, feet, hips or shoulders are involved, they will also provide you with specific exercises to help maintain mobility and strength in those joints.

In many cases, people can participate in group exercise programs in a pool and on land. Exercising in a pool is beneficial due to the buoyancy factor; people do not have to weight bear on sore and inflamed joints, however are still able to stay physically active. Many studies have proven the positive benefits of exercise for those with Ankylosing Spondylitis, such as improved rib cage expansion when breathing, and improved posture of the upper back and neck. A physiotherapist is also able to implement other pain relieving treatments that can help to manage symptoms.

None of the information in this newsletter is a replacement for proper medical advice. It is important that you always see a medical professional for advice on your individual condition.

Answer: The letter 'E'



Roast Vegetable and Manchego Salad

Ingredients

4 tsp olive oil

3 medium-size parsnips

3 cloves of garlic, crushed

2 cup fresh baby spinach, washed

Balsamic glaze

1 Spanish onion

2 Red capsicum

½ cup Manchego cheese, cubed

1. Preheat oven (fan forced) to 220/200°C. Slice parsnip into small pieces and cover with oil before placing onto a baking tray along with garlic pieces. Roast for 20 minutes.
2. Cut onion and red capsicum to desired size and add to baking tray, then continue to roast for 15 minutes. Remove from oven and allow to cool for 10 minutes.
3. Place spinach and cheese into a small salad bowl with a small amount of olive oil.
4. Mix vegetables and spinach together in bowl. Serve and drizzle with balsamic glaze.

Add salt and pepper to taste. Serves two.

PHYSIO TIP...

It is possible to have an active role in your health and the way you age. Never underestimate the importance of proper nutrition, adequate movement and social support in maintaining your health.

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