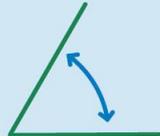


## Arthritis

### What are arthritis symptoms and signs?

 <p><b>Joint pain.</b></p>	 <p><b>Stiffness or reduced range of motion.</b></p>
 <p><b>Swelling (inflammation).</b></p>	 <p><b>Skin discoloration.</b></p>
 <p><b>Tenderness or sensitivity to touch around a joint.</b></p>	 <p><b>A feeling of heat or warmth near your joints.</b></p>

### What is arthritis?

Arthritis is a **common condition** that causes pain, stiffness, and swelling in the joints. It can affect people of any age, but it is more common as we get older. Arthritis may affect one joint or several joints.

There are many types of arthritis. The most common are **osteoarthritis** and **inflammatory arthritis** (such as rheumatoid arthritis).

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## **Common types of arthritis**

### **Osteoarthritis (OA)**

- The most common type of arthritis
- Related to changes in joint cartilage and surrounding tissues
- Often affects knees, hips, hands, spine, and feet
- Symptoms usually develop gradually

### **Inflammatory arthritis**

Examples include rheumatoid arthritis, psoriatic arthritis, and ankylosing spondylitis.

- Caused by inflammation of the immune system
- Can cause joint swelling, warmth, and prolonged stiffness
- May affect other parts of the body

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## **Common symptoms**

Symptoms vary depending on the type of arthritis but may include:

- Joint pain or aching
- Stiffness (often worse in the morning or after rest)
- Swelling or tenderness
- Reduced movement or flexibility
- Grinding or clicking sensations
- Fatigue (especially with inflammatory arthritis)

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## **What causes arthritis?**

Causes depend on the type of arthritis and may include:

- Age-related joint changes
- Previous injury or joint stress
- Genetics
- Autoimmune conditions

- Excess body weight increasing joint load
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### **How is arthritis diagnosed?**

Arthritis is diagnosed using:

- Your symptoms and medical history
  - Physical examination
  - Blood tests (for inflammatory types)
  - Imaging such as X-rays, ultrasound, or MRI if needed
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### **Treatment and management**

There is no single cure for arthritis, but symptoms can be **effectively managed**.

#### **Exercise and activity**

- Regular, gentle exercise helps reduce pain and stiffness
- Improves strength, flexibility, and joint support
- Activities may include walking, swimming, cycling, or exercise classes

#### **Physiotherapy**

Physiotherapy can help with:

- Individualised exercise programmes
- Improving movement and function
- Advice on pacing and joint protection

#### **Pain management**

- Pain relief medication as advised by your GP
- Heat or ice packs for symptom relief
- Relaxation techniques

#### **Lifestyle advice**

- Maintain a healthy weight
- Stay active within comfortable limits
- Use supportive footwear or aids if required

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## Self-management tips

- Keep moving – rest can increase stiffness
  - Pace activities and avoid overdoing it
  - Break tasks into manageable steps
  - Use joints wisely and avoid unnecessary strain
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## When should I seek further help?

Contact your GP or healthcare professional if:

- Pain or swelling is worsening
  - Joints become very swollen, hot, or red
  - Symptoms affect sleep, work, or daily activities
  - You experience unexplained fatigue or weight loss
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## **Outlook**

Many people with arthritis lead **active and independent lives**. With the right combination of exercise, education, and treatment, symptoms can often be well controlled.

If you have concerns or ongoing symptoms, speak to your GP or physiotherapist for further advice.