

HAVE YOUR SAY - RINGMEAD MEDICAL PRACTICE PATIENT PARTICIPATION GROUP NEWSLETTER



NEW TELEPHONE SYSTEM

A new telephone system has been installed which has had a few hiccups but hopefully will soon be resolved. There is now to be a hub of staff answering phones with a clinician on hand to answer medical queries.

ARTHRITIS

Arthritis is an illness that affects many people and is, surprisingly, not very well understood. It isn't a single disease because there are over 100 types of arthritis and related conditions that can affect people of ANY age or race, even children.

Arthritis causes pain and swelling in joints and is the most common cause of disability that can make simple, everyday tasks difficult to manage. The two most common forms are osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis. Both can have an adverse effect on our joints. See the picture below which shows the differences.

Osteoarthritis vs. Rheumatoid Arthritis



Osteoarthritis is the most common form of arthritis affecting mostly people over the age of 45 and those who have a genetic history of the disease. It can also occur at any age

following an injury and affect those who already have other joint related illnesses such as rheumatoid arthritis and gout, another form of arthritis.

It affects the cartilage lining of the joints, making them thinner and tougher and making tendons and ligaments work much harder as you move. This, in turn can cause 'arthritic lumps' to form and cause pain and discomfort when you move. It typically affects hands, spine, knees, hips and shoulders, and it is estimated that over 9 million people in the UK have this.

Further information on treatment and help can be found on the Versus Arthritis Website <https://www.versusarthritis.org/>

Rheumatoid arthritis is a less common illness affecting over 400,000 people in the UK. It is more common in women and typically starts when someone reaches middle age, although does affect many younger people. With this type of arthritis the body's immune system starts to attack the affected joint, causing considerable pain and swelling. It is widely known as an 'auto-immune' disease and patients affected are classed as being 'immuno-suppressed'. The disease affects other organs and tissues in the body, particularly the liver and kidneys.

Further information about this type of arthritis and treatment can be found on the National Rheumatoid Arthritis Society Website <https://nras.org.uk/>

Treatment of rheumatoid arthritis is usually directed by a Consultant Rheumatologist and it is very important to understand the impact and side effects of the type of drug you are using. These may be prescribed in tablet or injection form.

People's experiences of both illnesses can be very different, but here are some very general tips that can help:

1. Avoid sitting in the same position for too long. Aim to get up, stretch and move around. Examples of exercises can be found on a number of websites or may be provided by a qualified physiotherapist.
2. Gadgets such as automatic can and jar openers can be your friend and ease stress on your joints. Also consider kitchen tools specially made to help sufferers.
3. Put on socks or trousers sitting down to avoid stress on your legs.
4. Adapt your home as much as possible. Use a shower stool if this is safe, a grab bar where needed in the garden, outside your front door and in your bathroom.
5. Get help from Adult Social Services if you need it.
6. Go to a 'falls prevention' clinic to learn how to keep yourself safe.

Another common form of inflammatory arthritis is **Gout**. This can be very painful usually affecting the big toe joint, with other joints such as the ankle, lesser toe joints and the knee. Symptoms are intense pain, swelling, redness and heat radiating from the affected joint. Severe cases can be controlled by a 'rescue pack' provided on prescription from your GP.

Fibromyalgia (also called fibromyalgia syndrome or FMS) is a long-term condition that causes pain all over the body. As well as pain, those who suffer from the condition may also experience:

1. Increased sensitivity to pain
2. Fatigue (extreme tiredness)

3. Muscle stiffness and find it difficult to sleep
4. Headaches and problems with memory and concentration
5. IBS (irritable bowel syndrome) that causes bloating and stomach pain.

The condition can look like Rheumatoid Arthritis, treatment is available, although it may not disappear completely. The exact cause of the condition is not known. It affects around 7 times as many women as men and it is thought that the cause may be genetic or related to abnormal chemical changes in the brain which affect the way our bodies actually manage pain.

Many sufferers find that support groups are helpful and the main one is Fibromyalgia UK, website <https://www.fmauk.org/>

The following chart shows the affects of fibromyalgia:

