

“Arthritis: a miracle cure?”

What is Arthritis?

Arthritis is a group of musculoskeletal conditions in which there is wearing and inflammation of the joints causing chronic pain, swelling and stiffness. Nearly 3.3 million Australians have a disability due to arthritis and related conditions, and more than half of these have chronic or recurrent pain.

The two most common forms of arthritis are osteoarthritis (OA) and rheumatoid arthritis (RA), but they are very different. RA is a disease that can be detected via a blood test. In the RA disease process, the patient’s own immune system attacks the lining of their joints, causing pain, swelling and eventual deformity. Typically, it causes problems in the small joint such as the fingers.



An x-ray of hands with Rheumatoid arthritis

Drug therapy, gentle exercise and occasional splinting are the best treatments. Joint replacement is sometimes used. Thankfully, RA is rare.

Osteoarthritis (OA)

Conversely, OA is wear-and-tear, like rust in your joints. It typically effects large, weight bearing joints such as hips and knees. OA is far more common than RA—almost everyone of advancing years suffers some form of OA—our bodies simply weren’t designed to last that long!

The Role of Exercise

Moderate, regular exercise has been **proven** to aid in the prevention of arthritis, and offers a host of benefits to sufferers. Exercise can reduce joint pain and stiffness, builds strong muscles around the joints and increases flexibility and endurance.

The Role of Physiotherapy

Patients with OA may benefit from joint mobilization, electrotherapy, hydrotherapy and muscle strengthening exercises. Localized, specific massage techniques can also break up the ‘rust’ from the joint, greatly reducing the pain. Physiotherapy can reduce arthritic pain and reliance on drug therapy. Unlike pharmaceuticals, physiotherapy has few side effects or contraindications.

So although arthritis is a chronic disease, treatment and management techniques can control and reduce the effects of the condition, and prevent further deterioration. *Almost* like a miracle cure.

Joke of the Day

A physio called Joe is known as one of the best consultants on arthritis. He always has a waiting room full of people who need his advice and specialist treatment. One day, Betty, an elderly lady, slowly struggles into his waiting room. She is completely bent over and leans heavily on her walking stick. A chair is found for her. Eventually, her turn comes to go into Joe’s treatment rooms.

15 minutes later, to everyone’s surprise, she comes briskly out of his room walking almost upright. She is holding her head high and has a smile on her face. A woman in the waiting room says to Betty, “It’s unbelievable, a miracle even. You walk in bent in half and now you walk out straight. What a fantastic physio he is. Tell me, what did Joe do to you?”

“Miracle, Shmiracle,” says Betty, “he just gave me a longer walking stick.”