

## Living well

- When you're diagnosed with a chronic condition affecting your muscles, bones and joints you may feel overwhelmed and worried about your health
- There are many things you can do to take control and live a full, healthy life
- The first step is learning all you can about your condition

Call our National Help Line on 1800 263 265

The following tips will help you to understand your condition, make informed decisions and live well with a muscle, bone or joint condition.

*Links to peak organisations that can provide more specific help for your situation are provided at the end. Links for other useful resources are provided throughout this information sheet.*

### Learn about your condition

Ask questions, including:

- what condition do you have
- what are the symptoms
- how is it diagnosed
- what can you expect in the future
- what treatments are available
- what are the ways you can manage it?

The more you know about your condition, the more control you will have.

**MOVE muscle, bone & joint health: Conditions**  
[www.move.org.au/Conditions-and-Symptoms](http://www.move.org.au/Conditions-and-Symptoms)



### Work with your healthcare team

There are a vast range of health professionals who can work with you to manage your condition. You may see them on an ongoing basis, or you may visit them from time to time as needed.

Find out which medical and other health professionals will be helpful in managing your condition. Work with your healthcare team to select the best treatment options that suit your lifestyle and health needs.

**MOVE: Healthcare team**

[www.move.org.au/Living-Well/Your-Healthcare-Team](http://www.move.org.au/Living-Well/Your-Healthcare-Team)

### Understand your treatment options

Discover the treatment options including medication, exercise and massage that can help manage the pain and stiffness that you experience, as well as treatments that may slow the development of your condition. Know the options available, and discuss with your healthcare team whether they are right for you.

**Arthritis Foundation USA: Arthritis treatment options**  
[www.arthritis.org/living-with-arthritis/treatments](http://www.arthritis.org/living-with-arthritis/treatments)

### Explore different types of physical activity

Regular physical activity benefits everyone, and it can help to reduce pain, strengthen muscles and maintain joint function. It can also improve the fitness of our heart and lungs, increase bone strength, reduce body weight, improve your sleep, energy levels and mental wellbeing.

Talk with your doctor, a physiotherapist or exercise physiologist for more information and advice tailored specifically to your unique situation.

**MOVE: Exercise**

[www.move.org.au/Living-Well/Exercise](http://www.move.org.au/Living-Well/Exercise)

**Arthritis Foundation USA: Exercises for arthritis**  
[www.arthritis.org/living-with-arthritis/exercise](http://www.arthritis.org/living-with-arthritis/exercise)

*American College of Rheumatology: Exercise and arthritis*

[www.rheumatology.org/I-Am-A/Patient-Caregiver/Diseases-Conditions/Living-Well-with-Rheumatic-Disease/Exercise-and-Arthritis](http://www.rheumatology.org/I-Am-A/Patient-Caregiver/Diseases-Conditions/Living-Well-with-Rheumatic-Disease/Exercise-and-Arthritis)

### Learn how you can make healthy food choices

There is little evidence that particular foods are good or bad for people with muscle, bone and joint conditions. And there is no diet proven to cure these conditions.

But eating a healthy, well-balanced diet is important. It will help you maintain a healthy weight and reduce the load on your joints. Eating well will also help protect you against other health conditions. For bone health - whether you have osteoporosis, or to protect against getting it - it is important that your diet includes the necessary amount of calcium for your age and gender.

Talk with your doctor or dietitian for more information and advice.

*MOVE: Diet*

[www.move.org.au/Living-Well/Diet](http://www.move.org.au/Living-Well/Diet)

*Eat for Health - Australian Dietary Guidelines*

[www.eatforhealth.gov.au](http://www.eatforhealth.gov.au)

*Arthritis Research UK: Diet and arthritis*

[www.arthritisresearchuk.org/arthritis-information/arthritis-and-daily-life/diet-and-arthritis.aspx](http://www.arthritisresearchuk.org/arthritis-information/arthritis-and-daily-life/diet-and-arthritis.aspx)

### Identify effective pain management techniques

There is no 'one size fits all' when it comes to pain management. Not all pain management techniques will suit every situation or every person. Identify a range of strategies that you find effective so that you have a collection to choose from to suit particular situations, such as ice packs to reduce swelling, medicines for pain relief, relaxation techniques to ease tense muscles.

There are many options available to help you manage and live with pain. Talk to your healthcare team for more advice.

*MOVE: Chronic pain*

[www.move.org.au/Living-Well/Chronic-Pain](http://www.move.org.au/Living-Well/Chronic-Pain)

*National Prescribing Service: Pain diary*

[www.nps.org.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0003/88338/My-pain-diary.pdf](http://www.nps.org.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/88338/My-pain-diary.pdf)

### Manage your fatigue

Recognise that there may be times when you experience periods of mental and physical tiredness, or fatigue.

This fatigue can make every day activities seem overwhelming. Fatigue may be caused by lack of sleep, pain, medications, depression or the condition itself. There are many things you can do to help combat this fatigue including exercise, pacing your activities through the day, getting a good night's sleep and talking with your doctor about your medications.

*Arthritis Research UK: Fatigue and arthritis*

[www.arthritisresearchuk.org/arthritis-information/arthritis-and-daily-life/fatigue.aspx](http://www.arthritisresearchuk.org/arthritis-information/arthritis-and-daily-life/fatigue.aspx)

*Better Health Channel: Fatigue*

[www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/conditionsandtreatments/fatigue](http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/conditionsandtreatments/fatigue)

### Recognise the emotional challenges

Recognise and acknowledge the emotional challenges that come with managing your condition. It is natural for you to feel a range of emotions, including fear, stress, depression and frustration, when living with a chronic condition. It is important that you acknowledge these feelings. You may want to talk with a counsellor or psychologist, write in a journal, talk with a family member or close friend. Don't ignore these feelings

*Arthritis Care UK: Coping with emotions*

[www.arthritiscare.org.uk/what-is-arthritis/resources/214-coping-with-emotions](http://www.arthritiscare.org.uk/what-is-arthritis/resources/214-coping-with-emotions)

### Research complementary and alternative treatments

If you are interested in complementary and alternative treatments, do your research. These treatments include things such as acupuncture, massage, herbal medicines and aromatherapy. Some treatments can be useful in helping you manage your condition, while others will have no effect. And some have side effects or may interact with your other treatments. It is important to check the qualifications of the person providing the treatment and to talk to your healthcare team about the treatment and whether it is right for you.

*Arthritis Research UK: Complementary and alternative treatments*

[www.arthritisresearchuk.org/arthritis-information/complementary-and-alternative-medicines/complementary-therapies.aspx](http://www.arthritisresearchuk.org/arthritis-information/complementary-and-alternative-medicines/complementary-therapies.aspx)

### Get a good night's sleep

It can be difficult when you live with chronic muscle, bone and joint conditions to get a good night's sleep. Pain, muscle tension, stress and other factors can interfere with your sleep. Not getting enough good quality sleep can impact on the pain and muscle tension you experience. This can become a vicious cycle. If you are experiencing difficulties with sleep, there are many things you can do. Start by talking with your doctor. Call our Help Line and speak with our nurses. Borrow sleep resources from your local library.

*MOVE: Sleep*

[www.move.org.au/Living-Well/Sleep](http://www.move.org.au/Living-Well/Sleep)

*Arthritis Research UK: Sleep and arthritis*

[www.arthritisresearchuk.org/arthritis-information/arthritis-and-daily-life/sleep-and-arthritis.aspx](http://www.arthritisresearchuk.org/arthritis-information/arthritis-and-daily-life/sleep-and-arthritis.aspx)

### Working with a chronic condition

Working is good for your health and wellbeing, but sometimes your condition may interfere with your work. Muscle, bone and joint conditions can be unpredictable – you can be fine one day but having a 'flare up' the next. This unpredictability can be stressful. Talk to your doctor or allied healthcare professional about ways to help you stay at work.

There are many things you can do to enable you to continue working such as pain management techniques (eg mindfulness), medication, modifying the workspace, using aids and equipment (eg modified mouse and keyboard) and having some flexibility with the hours worked.

*Arthritis Foundation USA: Finding a job and working with arthritis*

[www.arthritis.org/living-with-arthritis/life-stages/work/workforce-ready.php](http://www.arthritis.org/living-with-arthritis/life-stages/work/workforce-ready.php)

*Arthritis Research UK: Work and arthritis*

[www.arthritisresearchuk.org/arthritis-information/arthritis-and-daily-life/work-and-arthritis.aspx](http://www.arthritisresearchuk.org/arthritis-information/arthritis-and-daily-life/work-and-arthritis.aspx)

*Arthritis Care UK: Work*

[www.arthritiscare.org.uk/managing-arthritis/work](http://www.arthritiscare.org.uk/managing-arthritis/work)

### Find aids to assist with daily activities

Sometimes tasks we take for granted may be affected by muscle, bone and joint conditions. For example, if you have arthritis in your hands you may find turning a tap becomes difficult. Or if you have back pain you may find

reaching down to tie your shoes exacerbates your pain. This impact on the ability to do everyday activities can be upsetting and may effect your feeling of independence.

The good news is there is a large range of aids and equipment available to help you with activities of daily living. Items available include aids to help with cooking, cleaning, bathing, writing, mobility, technology and driving. The items needed will vary greatly from person to person, so it is a good idea to talk to an occupational therapist and have an individual assessment.

*MOVE: Making life easier*

[www.move.org.au/Living-Well/Making-Life-Easier](http://www.move.org.au/Living-Well/Making-Life-Easier)

### Have a support team

Family and friends can help support you physically and emotionally with the day-to-day ups and downs of living with a chronic condition. It is important that you are honest with them so they can provide the support you need – don't be afraid to ask for help.

As well as support from family and friends, you may be interested in joining a peer support group. Meeting with people who know what you are going through, who have similar conditions and experiences, can be extremely beneficial.

MOVE has many peer support groups . Most of these groups meet face-to-face, but there are several that you can access via websites or social media.

*MOVE: Peer Support Groups*

[www.move.org.au/Useful-Information/Our-Services/Peer-Support-Groups](http://www.move.org.au/Useful-Information/Our-Services/Peer-Support-Groups)

### Keep a diary or journal

It can be helpful to keep a diary recording the changes in your condition, the effectiveness of medications you are taking, how you feel physically and mentally, the quality of your sleep, and your pain and fatigue levels. This information can help you when you visit your doctor – especially if there is some time between your appointments. It provides an accurate reflection of how you have been, rather than trying to recall the information when you are sitting in your doctor's office.

To get started, you can use an ordinary notebook to



write this information down. Or there are many apps and templates you can download and use. Some are free, however some do have a fee to access them. |

### Let's talk about sex

Relationships and intimacy are an important part of life. At times the physical and emotional symptoms of your condition may put pressure on your relationships and your sex life. There are things you can do to prevent this from happening. Being open and honest with your partner about how you feel - both physically and emotionally - is the first step.

*Arthritis Research UK: Sex and arthritis*

[www.arthritisresearchuk.org/arthritis-information/arthritis-and-daily-life/sex-and-arthritis.aspx](http://www.arthritisresearchuk.org/arthritis-information/arthritis-and-daily-life/sex-and-arthritis.aspx)

*American College of Rheumatology: Sex and arthritis*

[www.rheumatology.org/I-Am-A/Patient-Caregiver/Diseases-Conditions/Living-Well-with-Rheumatic-Disease/Sex-Arthritis](http://www.rheumatology.org/I-Am-A/Patient-Caregiver/Diseases-Conditions/Living-Well-with-Rheumatic-Disease/Sex-Arthritis)

### Things to remember

- When you're diagnosed with a chronic condition affecting your muscles, bones and joints you may feel overwhelmed and worried about your health
- There are many things you can do to take control and live a full, healthy life
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### How we can help

Call our National Help Line and speak to our nurses  
Phone 1800 263 265 or email [helpline@move.org.au](mailto:helpline@move.org.au)

Visit our website [move.org.au](http://move.org.au) for information on:

- muscle, bone and joint conditions
- ways to live well
- programs and services
- our new resource *Managing your pain: An A-Z guide*
- peer support groups
- upcoming webinars, seminars and other events.

### More to explore

- **Arthritis Research UK**  
[www.arthritisresearchuk.org](http://www.arthritisresearchuk.org)
- **Australian Physiotherapy Association**  
[www.physiotherapy.asn.au](http://www.physiotherapy.asn.au)
- **Australian Rheumatology Association**  
<http://rheumatology.org.au/community/PatientMedicineInformation.asp>
- **Better Health Channel**  
[www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au](http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au)
- **beyondblue**  
[www.beyondblue.org.au](http://www.beyondblue.org.au)
- **Dietitians Association of Australia**  
<http://daa.asn.au>
- **Exercise and Sports Science Australia**  
[www.essa.org.au](http://www.essa.org.au)
- **Independent Living Centre**  
<http://ilcaustralia.org.au>
- **MedlinePlus USA**  
[www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus](http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus)
- **National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health USA**  
<https://nccih.nih.gov>
- **NHS Choices UK**  
[www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)
- **Occupational Therapy Australia**  
[www.otaus.com.au](http://www.otaus.com.au)
- **Pain Australia**  
[www.painaustralia.org.au](http://www.painaustralia.org.au)
- **painHEALTH**  
[www.painhealth.csse.uwa.edu.au](http://www.painhealth.csse.uwa.edu.au)
- **Sleep Health Foundation**  
[www.sleephealthfoundation.org.au](http://www.sleephealthfoundation.org.au)

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