

---

## LOOKING AFTER YOURSELF

---

Living and coping with a chronic condition can be difficult. At times you may feel angry, depressed and isolated. It is not easy to accept the loss of good health or accept constant pain and changes in your physical appearance.

Talking about how you feel with someone who is close to you is very important. But sometimes you may feel the need to confide in someone who really understands. Arthritis New Zealand employs skilled Educators, who are always on hand. They can give you information and advice, put you in touch with support and exercise groups throughout the country and help you obtain special equipment and aids for daily living.

---

## LIVING WITH ARTHRITIS

---

A variety of known techniques can help people control and reduce the effects of arthritis. Research has shown that people who exercise regularly, practise relaxation and/or use other self management techniques have less pain and are more active than those people who are not self managers.

Self management courses are available through Arthritis New Zealand. They are designed to give people the skills needed to take a more active part in their arthritis care, together with a healthcare team. Medication, physical activity, joint protection, stress management, acupuncture, heat/cold therapy and weight control to prevent extra stress on weight bearing joints, are just some of the components of self management.

---

## ARTHRITIS NEW ZEALAND

---

Arthritis New Zealand is a not-for-profit organisation whose main aim is to enable a better quality of life for people affected by arthritis. Arthritis New Zealand works in the areas of education, public awareness, direct support, lobbying and funding research.

There are local Service Centres and 32 Arthritis Educators, who offer education, advice, information and guidance on services and special equipment. Arthritis Educators run highly regarded self management courses.

For more information look in the telephone directory for local contacts or contact:

**ARTHRITIS NEW ZEALAND**

**PO BOX 10-020**

**WELLINGTON**

**TELEPHONE 04 472 1427**

**[www.arthritis.org.nz](http://www.arthritis.org.nz)**



# PSORIATIC ARTHRITIS



*Discover You Can*

ARTHRITIS   
NEW ZEALAND  
ENABLING A BETTER QUALITY OF LIFE

KAIPONAPONA AOTEAROA  
*Te whakapiki i te kounga ora*

ARTHRITIS   
NEW ZEALAND  
ENABLING A BETTER QUALITY OF LIFE

KAIPONAPONA AOTEAROA  
*Te whakapiki i te kounga ora*

## WHAT IS PSORIATIC ARTHRITIS?

Psoriatic arthritis is an inflammatory arthritis associated with psoriasis, a chronic skin and nail disease. Psoriasis appears as red patches of skin covered with white, silvery, waxy scales. Psoriatic Arthritis affects about 10% of people who have psoriasis, often appearing years after the skin condition first appears. However, it can also occur before there is any skin involvement.

## WHAT CAUSES PSORIATIC ARTHRITIS?

The exact cause is unknown, but an interplay of immune, genetic, and environmental factors are suspected. Up to 40% of patients with psoriatic arthritis may have a history of psoriasis or arthritis in family members.

## WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

- scaly red patches that can appear on the scalp, elbows, knees, and/or the lower end of the backbone (Often, psoriasis may only be a small patch in the scalp. In some people, the rash may cover a good deal of the body.)
- pitting and/or discolouration of fingernails and/or toenails
- pain and swelling in one or more joints, usually the last joints of the fingers or toes, the wrists, knees, or ankles. Some people with psoriatic arthritis may have only one joint affected while in others it may resemble rheumatoid arthritis. The sacroiliac joints and the spine can also be involved. Because of this, psoriatic arthritis belongs to a group of disorders known as the spondyloarthropathies (spondylo = spine; arthropathy = joint disease)
- swelling of fingers and/or toes that gives them a “sausage” appearance

Psoriatic arthritis can develop over a long period of time, or it can appear quite suddenly.

## HOW IS IT DIAGNOSED

The doctor will ask about symptoms and perform a physical examination.

Since the symptoms of this type of arthritis are similar to other forms of arthritis, the doctor may also perform some, or all, of the following tests:

- X-rays to look for changes in bones and joints
- blood tests to rule out other conditions, such as rheumatoid arthritis
- joint fluid tests to rule out gout, another arthritis-related disease that may resemble psoriatic arthritis

If the skin condition has appeared first and nails and skin are affected along with the joints, a concrete diagnosis can be made almost immediately.

Otherwise a firm diagnosis may have to wait until the development of the skin disease.

*Treatment may include one or a combination of skin care, medications and other treatments...*

*Discover You Can*



## TREATMENT OPTIONS

The goals of treatment are to reduce joint pain and swelling, control the skin patches, and to slow down or prevent joint damage. Treatment may include one or a combination of skin care, medications and other treatments.

### *Skin*

The skin must be well cared for – especially during the winter. The aim is to reduce the dryness and skin lesions caused by the psoriasis.

- Use a lotion or lanolin cream
- Use non-irritant soaps
- Put baby oil in the bath water or rub it on the skin after showering
- Use a humidifier in the winter
- Avoid using strong soaps or chemicals

Sitting in the sun for moderate periods of time is helpful because sunlight slows down cell multiplication. Too much sunlight acts as a ‘trigger factor’, however, so avoid sunburn.

### *Joints*

Depending on the severity of the pain, inflammation and swelling, the health professional will prescribe some or all of the following options

- exercise
- rest
- heat and cold treatments
- splints
- medications

For information and support contact the Psoriasis Association of NZ Inc email [psoriasis@xtra.co.nz](mailto:psoriasis@xtra.co.nz) or tel 04 568 7139.