

# About Arthritis

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



ARTHRITIS   
NEW ZEALAND

ENABLING A BETTER QUALITY OF LIFE

KAIPONAPONA AOTEAROA

*Te whakapiki i te kounga ora*

# Did you know?

- Arthritis affects more than 530,000 New Zealanders. In fact, it is the greatest cause of disability in this country.
- Arthritis literally means ‘inflammation of the joint’. There are more than 140 recognised forms of the condition, but the three most common types are osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis and gout.

This booklet will give you an overview of what arthritis is and how Arthritis New Zealand can help.

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## Arthritis: the 3 most common types

**Osteoarthritis** is the most common type of arthritis. It usually affects the 50 plus age group, and slightly more women than men. It involves the breakdown of the protective cushion of the cartilage covering the ends of the bones, where two bones meet to form a joint.

**Rheumatoid arthritis** is an autoimmune condition where the immune system mistakenly targets your joints. If not properly treated on-going inflammation can damage joints and other organs. It can start at any age but usually occurs between the ages of 20 and 55. Three times as many women as men are affected.

**Gout** is believed to be the most painful form of arthritis. It can affect any joint but the first attack usually affects the big toe or another part of the foot. It occurs when there is too much uric acid in your blood. Uric acid turns into crystals in your joints. If not treated, gout can become chronic causing damage to the joints and bones.

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## Who is at risk?

While anyone can be affected by arthritis at any stage in their life, there are four groups most at risk:

### *Older people*

Ageing increases the chances of getting arthritis particularly osteoarthritis due to wear and tear on joints.

### *Sports people*

Injuries from contact and other very physical sports are likely to lead to osteoarthritis. Prompt and appropriate treatment at the time of the injury lessens the risk of long term damage.

### *Women*

More women get arthritis than men, particularly rheumatoid arthritis. The onset of rheumatoid arthritis tends to be in young women or those of middle age.

### *Māori & Pasifika men*

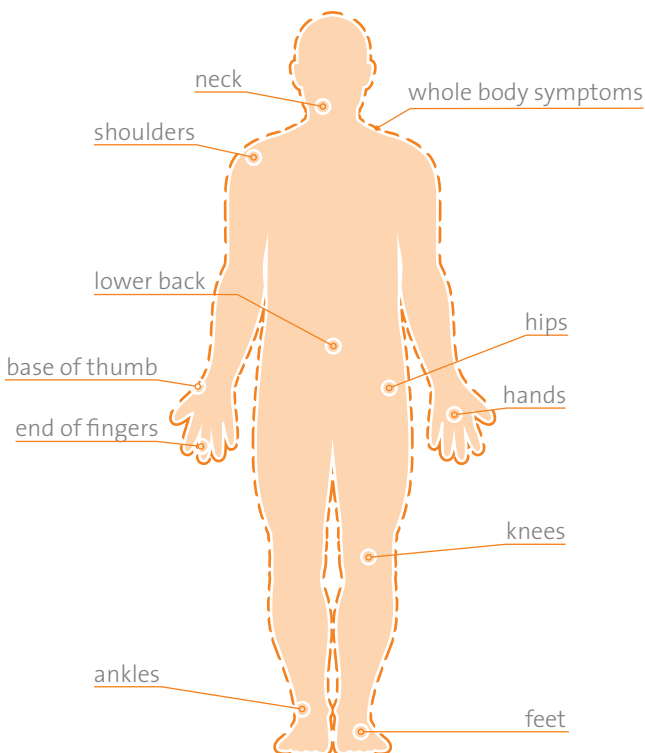
New Zealand Māori and Pasifika men have the highest incidence of gout in the world.

*Children can develop arthritis too. Around one child in 1000 is affected by juvenile idiopathic arthritis (JIA). It is commonly diagnosed between ages one and four, but can occur at any age.*

## Arthritis symptoms to watch for

- Swelling in one or more joints
- Early morning stiffness for more than a few minutes
- Recurring pain or tenderness in one or more joints
- Reduced movement
- Obvious redness or warmth in one or more joints
- Unexplained weight loss, fever or weakness combined with joint pain.

### *Common joints affected by arthritis*





## Treatment

Treatment depends on the type and severity of arthritis. It is important a correct diagnosis is made before beginning any treatment. Generally, for most types of arthritis, the treatment will include medication, rest and/or exercise, joint protection and in some cases surgery to correct or prevent deformity, increase mobility and improve quality of life.

## 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. They can give you information and advice, refer you to other health professionals and/or agencies, 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 proven self-management tools and techniques can help people control and reduce the effects of arthritis. Medication, physical activity, joint protection, stress management, heat/cold therapy, weight control to prevent extra stress on weight bearing joints and evidence-based complementary products are just some of the components of self-management.

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 and workshops 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.





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## 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 focuses on increasing public awareness about arthritis, lobbying for better access to services and medications, funding research on arthritis and providing education, information and advice.

To find out about coming seminars, self-management workshops and programmes, local support groups and exercise classes, contact 0800 663 463 to speak with one of our experienced Arthritis Educators.

A range of informative brochures on different types of arthritis, pain management, diet and exercise is available on our website. You can also order hard copies.

*See back cover for complete address details.*



## *Services provided by Arthritis New Zealand*

**Public awareness**, including national campaigns such as our television campaigns, National Appeal, media releases, open public days, seminars and forums.

**Lobbying** is done at national levels for improved rheumatology services and increased access to medication subsidies for people affected by arthritis. Visit our website [www.arthritis.org.nz](http://www.arthritis.org.nz) for our advocacy priorities and how you can become involved.

**Funding of research** in New Zealand is done through the 'National Arthritis Research Fund' sponsored by Arthritis New Zealand.

**Education** is provided by Arthritis Educators through:

- Individual consultations
- Seminars
- Community education talks
- Gout hui
- Presentations
- Workshops
- Self-management courses

**Information** is provided through:

- 0800 663 463
- [www.arthritis.org.nz](http://www.arthritis.org.nz)
- A quarterly magazine 'Joint Support'
- Brochures and booklets.

**Direct support** is provided by local Arthritis Educators and local support groups by identifying the needs and referring to relevant agencies.

### **How you can help**

- Make a donation – every dollar helps
- Become a member of Arthritis New Zealand
- Make provision in your will for a gift to Arthritis New Zealand
- Offer to become a volunteer in your area.

# Where can I learn more?

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

## *Regional offices*

Northern (Auckland) 09 523 8900

Midland/Central (Wellington) 04 472 1427

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ARTHRITIS NEW ZEALAND

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