

# Arthritis and Musculoskeletal Conditions

## Exercise and arthritis and musculoskeletal conditions

Regular, moderate exercise aids in the prevention of musculoskeletal conditions and offers a host of benefits to people with arthritis and osteoporosis. Exercise can reduce joint pain and stiffness, builds strong muscle around the joints, and increases flexibility and endurance. Weight-bearing exercise assists in the maintenance of bone mass. Therefore, regular exercise such as walking, jogging, tennis or aerobic classes is recommended to help in the prevention of osteoporosis.

The highly skilled physiotherapists in our practice can design tailored exercise and aquatic programs to increase physical activity and function without aggravating any coexisting problems. We also provide realistic advice to encourage self-management and build self-confidence to allow patients to make decisions in coping with their condition.



*The treatment of arthritis and musculoskeletal conditions is a core function of physiotherapy practice.*

*Don't suffer any longer – come visit us today!*

### Kalamunda Physiotherapy Centre

45 Central Road,  
KALAMUNDA, WA,6076

P 08 9257 1244

F 08 9257 1204

E [kalaphys@iinet.net.au](mailto:kalaphys@iinet.net.au)

W [www.kalamundaphysio.com.au](http://www.kalamundaphysio.com.au)



AUSTRALIAN PHYSIOTHERAPY ASSOCIATION

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## Musculoskeletal Conditions

Musculoskeletal conditions are those conditions involving the muscles, the skeleton and the joints (includes arthritis).

Arthritis and musculoskeletal conditions are a major cause of pain and disability, affecting around 6.1 million Australians. However, effective treatment and management can reduce the effects of these conditions, and there is also potential for prevention. Arthritis is a group of musculoskeletal conditions in which there is wearing and inflammation of the joints, causing chronic pain, swelling, stiffness, disability and sometimes deformity.

### What is arthritis?

Arthritis can be disabling because of restricted mobility from severe joint pain. 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 and rheumatoid arthritis, but there are more than 100 known types of arthritis. Arthritis can result from injury, infection, accumulated wear, degenerative changes, metabolic disturbances, autoimmunity or other causes.

Children can also develop arthritis in a number of forms, which together are grouped under the name juvenile idiopathic arthritis.

## The role of physiotherapy

The treatment of arthritis and musculoskeletal conditions is a core function of physiotherapy practice.

Patients with arthritis may benefit from joint mobilisation, electrotherapy, hydrotherapy, and muscle strengthening exercises.

Physiotherapy can reduce arthritic pain and reliance on drug therapy. Unlike pharmaceuticals, physiotherapy has no side effects and no contraindications.

Musculoskeletal physiotherapy encompasses the majority of work done in private practice.

Physiotherapists treat back and neck pain, muscle strains, spasms and contusions (bruising), joint injuries, tendinitis and bursitis, and muscle imbalance or weakness.

Physiotherapy modalities are critical to the treatment and management of people with disabilities that have musculoskeletal elements. Quality of life is improved by therapy, education and prescription of aids (e.g. walking stick) etc. Physiotherapists teach people with disabilities and their families how to improve mobility and teach carers how to reduce the risk of musculoskeletal injury.



## Prevention, management and treatment of arthritis and musculoskeletal conditions

Although arthritis is a chronic disease and there is no known cure, treatments and management techniques can help control and reduce the effects of the condition and prevent further deterioration, and may aid in prevention. There are a number of ways of reducing the risk of the onset of arthritis and musculoskeletal conditions:

- avoiding joint injury
- avoiding vitamin D deficiency and adopting healthy lifestyle behaviours
  - healthy weight - obesity is a risk factor for all chronic disease
  - healthy eating - a balanced diet rich in vitamin D and calcium
  - regular physical activity
  - avoiding tobacco use
  - avoiding high risk alcohol use and
  - falls and falls injuries prevention strategies

