



Rheumatoid Arthritis

ESSENTIAL PHYSIOTHERAPY

What is it?

Rheumatoid arthritis is a type of arthritis classified as an autoimmune disease. Autoimmune disorders are conditions where the immune system of the body mistakenly attacks healthy tissues. This process of inflammation, the body's defence system against injury and infection can damage joints and cause deformity over a long period of time. Unlike osteoarthritis, which usually affects larger joints that are involved in weight bearing, rheumatoid arthritis can affect many joints at the same time, with smaller and larger joints affected equally.

What are the symptoms?

Rheumatoid arthritis is a chronic disease, characterized by periods of remissions and flare-ups. During a flare-up, joints might become red, hot, swollen and painful. During a remission a patient might have few symptoms, however over many years, these flare-ups can degrade and deform joints, causing them to lose function and the muscles around them to weaken.

The symptoms of rheumatoid arthritis vary from mild to severe and as mentioned, can fluctuate significantly over time. As movement can help to reduce swelling caused by inflammation, pain can actually increase as joints are rested. A person with rheumatoid arthritis may complain of pain and stiffness that is worst when waking and may take 1-2 hours to subside.

What are the causes?

While rheumatoid arthritis is known to be a process of autoimmune dysfunction, the trigger that causes the immune system to attack healthy tissues is unknown. In some cases, a virus may trigger the onset of the disease. There is evidence that women have a stronger immune system than men, and a downside of this is that they are more prone to autoimmune disorders, as is the case with Rheumatoid Arthritis.

Other risk factors associated with rheumatoid arthritis include a family history of rheumatoid arthritis, obesity and smoking.

How can physiotherapy help?

While there is no cure at present for the disease process that causes rheumatoid arthritis, there are treatments that can improve the patient's quality of life and help to manage the symptoms. The first line of treatment for rheumatoid arthritis is medication particularly, anti-inflammatory medications. Change in lifestyle and diet are also advised.

The objectives of physiotherapy treatment for rheumatoid arthritis are to improve joint mobility, increase strength, restore the function of the affected joints and to maintain the level of activity of the patient. Physiotherapy treatments include heat or cold therapy, hydrotherapy, therapeutic exercises, pain management, manual techniques and patient education. Splinting may be done to protect joints from further damage. Patient education is an important part of the treatment so that the patient is knowledgeable about his/her disease, what to do and not to do.

All of these treatments can help reduce the potential long-term disabilities caused by rheumatoid arthritis. Speak to your physiotherapist for more information.

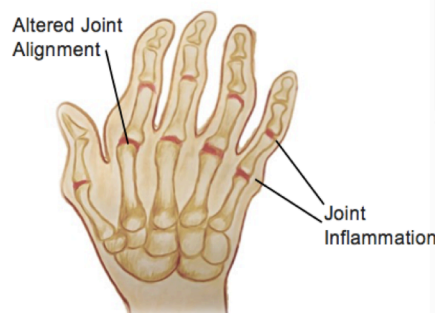


Fig. A – Hand affected by Rheumatoid Arthritis

Did You Know?

Identical twins may have the same genetic material, however they still do not have the same fingerprints.

Similar to fingerprints, we all have unique tongue prints. These are less useful for detectives when solving crimes!



Brain Teasers

1. Which five letter word becomes shorter when you add two letters to it?
2. Who is bigger, Mr Bigger, Mrs. Bigger, or their baby?
3. What did the ocean say to the beach?

PhysioTip

Treat your exercise prescription like you would a medication prescription.

You should do them regularly and for the amount of time recommended by your physiotherapist for the best results.

Tibialis Posterior Tendinopathy

The tibialis posterior muscle sits just inside the shin, halfway up the lower leg. The muscle travels downwards and runs along the inside of the heel, with the tendon attaching at the base of the arch of the foot.

The role of the tibialis posterior muscle is to move the foot and ankle downwards and towards the midline of the body. The tibialis posterior also helps to support and maintain the arch of the foot. *Tendinopathy* is a broad term that refers to painful pathologies of the tissues in and around a tendon, usually related to overuse.

What are the symptoms?

Signs and symptoms of tibialis posterior tendinopathy can include pain and/or stiffness over the tendon, clicking or 'crepitus' sounds with movement and swelling. Pain can be felt both when you touch the tendon or with movements that involve contraction of the tibialis posterior muscle, such as when going up on to your toes, hopping or running.

As the condition progresses, the tendon might become weaker and elongated, providing less support to the arch of the foot. This might become more noticeable over time as the lack of support in the foot further aggravates the damaged tendon.

Pain may become so severe that eventually running becomes too painful to continue and even walking may be sore. In some cases, the affected tendon may be weakened but painless. For some, a complete tear of a weakened tendon can be the first sign that anything is wrong.

What are the causes?

Like most tendinopathies, overuse and biomechanical errors are the main cause of tendon pathology. Prolonged or repetitive activities that place excessive strain on the tibialis posterior tendon can cause degeneration and disorganization of collagen fibres within the tendon.

Excessive pronation or rolling in of the foot while walking can place the tendon under extra stress as it acts to support the arch. Unsupportive footwear can exacerbate this process as it allows the foot to roll inwards. Often, a person may not have any issues until they begin to increase their training. If tendons are subjected to too much load too quickly, they can begin to breakdown, developing into a tendinopathy.

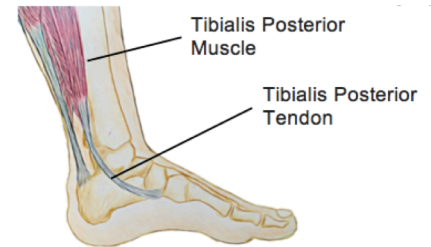
Being overweight, muscle weakness or tightness, poor warm up and insufficient recovery periods can all contribute to the development of tendinopathy. As you might expect, runners are most affected by this condition, along with other athletes of sports that require lots of running. Non-athletes can also be affected with day-to-day activities causing tendinopathy.

How can physiotherapy help?

Your physiotherapist can help by making an accurate diagnosis in clinic, which can be confirmed by MRI or ultrasound. Your physiotherapist can also identify which factors may be involved in the development of this condition, helping to address them and reduce pain as quickly as possible.

For most tendinopathies, a period of relative rest is required and a graded training program to help strengthen the tendon has been shown to have the best evidence for recovery. Other interventions such as ultrasound, ice or heat treatment, soft tissue massage, stretching and joint mobilization may be used. Arch support taping, biomechanical correction, bracing and footwear advice may also be added.

None of the information in this newsletter is a replacement for proper medical advice. Always see a medical professional for advice on your individual injury.



Answers: 1. The word 'Short' 2. The baby, he is a little bigger 3. Nothing, it waved!

Mixed Seed Pumpkin Bread



Ingredients:

½ cup of coconut oil
2 cups of plain flour
1 tsp. baking soda
½ tsp. baking powder
1½ tsp. ground cinnamon
¼ tsp. grated nutmeg
¼ tsp. ground cardamom
½ tsp. salt
1 cup brown sugar
2 large eggs
1 cup pumpkin puree*
1/3 cup coconut cream
2 tsp. pure vanilla extract
¼ cup coarsely chopped walnuts
¼ cup roasted pumpkin seeds
2 Tbsp. salted sunflower seeds

*Prepare pumpkin puree by roasting 1½ cups of chopped pumpkin and blending in a food processor. Strain to remove any large pieces from mixture.

1. Preheat an oven to 180 degrees Celsius or 350 degrees Fahrenheit. Prepare a medium sized cake tin by greasing with butter (or coconut oil) and a small amount of flour.
2. Mix the spices, flour, baking soda, baking powder and salt together in a medium sized bowl and set aside.
3. In a larger bowl, beat coconut oil and brown sugar until they are well mixed. Continue to beat mixture, slowly adding eggs one at a time, waiting a minute before adding the second egg. Once well combined, add the pumpkin puree, coconut cream and vanilla and continue mixing. Finally add flour mixture and beat on low speed until combined.
4. Spoon the mixture into the greased cake tin. Cover with walnuts, pecans, and seeds.
5. Bake mixture for 45-55 minutes until a golden brown colour. To test the inside, insert a wooden skewer, if it comes out clean it is ready. Set bread on a cooling rack and allow to cool for 15 minutes before serving.



18 Olivedale St
BIRDWOOD SA, 5234

4 George Street
WILLIAMSTOWN SA, 5351

For Appointments:
Call (08) 8568 5455
Text 0413597417

Or Through Our Website At
www.essentialphysio.com.au

admin@essentialphysio.com.au