Psoriatic Arthritis

Understanding symptoms, treatment and living well

Psoriatic Arthritis

A guide to treatment, activity and self-management



Understanding psoriatic arthritis

Psoriatic arthritis (PsA) is a long-term inflammatory condition affecting joints and sometimes the spine. It is linked to psoriasis, which causes red, scaly skin patches. Symptoms may flare up and settle into remission.

Supporting your wellbeing

Early diagnosis and treatment help reduce joint damage. With appropriate treatment and regular monitoring, many people lead active and fulfilling lives.

Understanding your condition

Symptoms, contributing factors and practical information

Who is affected?

Adults of any age, commonly between 30 and 50, can be affected. It occurs in men and women equally and is associated with psoriasis, although not everyone with psoriasis develops arthritis. Joint symptoms can appear before, after or alongside skin symptoms.

Common symptoms

- Joint pain, swelling and stiffness
- Morning stiffness lasting longer than 30 minutes
- Swollen fingers or toes (“sausage digits”)
- Pain where tendons attach to bone, such as heel or elbow
- Back or buttock pain if the spine is affected
- Fatigue, low energy or nail pitting/separation

What causes it?

PsA is autoimmune: the immune system causes inflammation in joints and tissues. Genetic predisposition, immune-system changes and environmental triggers such as infections or stress may contribute. It is not caused by wear and tear.

How is it diagnosed?

Assessment includes symptoms and history; examination of joints, skin and nails; blood tests for inflammation and to exclude other conditions; and X-ray, ultrasound or MRI if needed. Early diagnosis helps reduce joint damage.

Key message

Early diagnosis and treatment help reduce joint damage. With appropriate treatment and regular monitoring, many people lead active and fulfilling lives.

Exercise and rehabilitation

Suitable activity under professional guidance

Exercise and activity examples

Regular low-impact exercise is encouraged. Physiotherapy can maintain joint movement and flexibility, improve strength and fitness, and help manage pain and stiffness.



Activity guidance

Movement: maintain comfortable joint flexibility.
Fitness: choose suitable low-impact activity.
Strength: follow a programme tailored to your joints.
Pacing: adjust activity and avoid overdoing it during flare-ups.

Exercise safely

Stay active within your limits and ask your physiotherapist for advice on exercise, pacing and managing flare-ups. Symptoms can fluctuate with quieter and more active periods.

Management and next steps

Treatment, self-care and when to seek advice

Medication and specialist care

A rheumatologist may prescribe anti-inflammatory medication, disease-modifying anti-rheumatic drugs (DMARDs) or biologic therapies. These reduce inflammation, control symptoms and protect joints. There is no cure, but PsA can be effectively managed.

Self-management and lifestyle

- Stay active within your limits
- Pace activities during flare-ups
- Maintain a healthy weight to reduce joint strain
- Manage stress, which can trigger flare-ups
- Look after skin and nails as advised

When should I seek further help?

Contact your GP or rheumatology team if symptoms suddenly worsen, joints become very swollen, hot or painful, fatigue significantly affects daily life, or medication causes side effects.

Outlook and advice

Early diagnosis, appropriate treatment, regular monitoring and self-management help many people lead active, fulfilling lives. Speak to your GP, rheumatologist or physiotherapist with questions.

Physiotherapy support

A tailored programme can help maintain movement and flexibility, improve strength and fitness, and support management of pain, stiffness and flare-ups.

B-Well Physiotherapy Services

0300 303 4811

bwell.mskberkshire@nhs.net

www.bwellberkshire.co.uk