

Jo Tait

GradDipPhys M.C.S.P. Chartered Physiotherapist

BROUGHTON ASTLEY PHYSIOTHERAPY CLINIC

Priory House, 46 Station Road, Broughton Astley, LE9 6PT

Tel/fax 01455 285949 www.jotaitphysiotherapy.co.uk

ARTHRITIS

There are 2 main types of arthritis- Rheumatoid and Osteo-arthritis. The former is more severe and fortunately rarer. It usually runs in families and starts in the small joints of the hands and feet leading to characteristic deformity. Physiotherapy can help with pain relief and advice about joint protection.

Osteo-arthritis(OA), however, affects everyone over the age of 30 to a greater or lesser extent. It is normal joint degeneration/"wear and tear". If osteo-arthritis occurs in the neck or lower back it is called spondylosis. By the age of 60, 80% people will have arthritic joint changes visible on X-ray but only 15% will have pain and stiffness. This occurs when the cartilage at the ends of the bone thins and roughens. The body tries to repair the damage and the joint may thicken and there is a characteristic good and bad day pattern of pain.

The risk of developing OA increases with overuse eg in the knees of carpet-fitters, following injury eg a fracture close to the joint or malalignment such as flat feet or leg length discrepancy. Knees are very commonly affected by OA and this is aggravated by being overweight. Standing up from sitting puts forces of 8 times your bodyweight through each knee!

A Chartered Physiotherapist is skilled and experienced in the assessment and treatment of all arthritic conditions. She can reduce your pain, promote mobility, maintain strength and function and prevent further deterioration.

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