

Spring/Summer 2024

# news



Tanya, 23

**Arthritis is the UK's biggest cause of pain and disability. It can affect anyone.**

Here's how you can get support:

[www.arthritisaction.org.uk](http://www.arthritisaction.org.uk)

#LetsTalkArthritis

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**Women,  
Hormones and  
Arthritis**

**Top Tips for  
Working Life**

**Swimming and  
Water-Based  
Exercise**

**Member Spotlight:  
Nina's Journey**

**ARMA Health  
Inequalities  
Report**

## About Us

**Arthritis Action** was founded in 1942 by Charles de Coti-Marsh who, following the best science of the time, devised a treatment programme that used natural methods with the purpose of relieving people of the symptoms of their arthritis.

Today, Arthritis Action offers a self-management approach based on weight management and healthy eating advice, clinical therapies, exercise tips and guidance on how to manage pain. Along with qualified staff who provide assistance and support, we help Members take control of their arthritis and lead fuller, more active lives.

To speak to our registered Dietitian **Martin Lau**, or for information about our Arthritis Action Groups and Self-Management Events, please call us on **0203 781 7120**.

### Find out more and follow us:

**Web:**  
[www.arthritisaction.org.uk](http://www.arthritisaction.org.uk)

**Email:**  
[info@arthritisaction.org.uk](mailto:info@arthritisaction.org.uk)

**WhatsApp:**  
0770 281 3737

**Facebook:**  
[www.facebook.com/ArthritisAction](https://www.facebook.com/ArthritisAction)

**Twitter:**  
@Arthritis\_ACTN

**Instagram:**  
[www.instagram.com/arthritisaction](https://www.instagram.com/arthritisaction)

**Health Unlocked:**  
[healthunlocked.com/arthritis-action](http://healthunlocked.com/arthritis-action)

# Contents

**4** Message from the Chair and Interim CEO

**5** Your Membership

**7** What's New in Arthritis Research?  
Our Medical Advisor Dr Wendy Holden reviews some of the latest research and what it may mean for patients.

**8** Member Spotlight:  
**Nina's Journey**  
Nina, 43, shares her journey and how she navigates work, hobbies and travel with seronegative arthritis.

**10** Groups and Events Update



**11** Our Top Tips for Working Life  
Changes to Flexible Working Regulations and tips on how to navigate working life.

**12** Women, Hormones and Arthritis  
A look at how hormones interact and impact on arthritis through a woman's life.

**14** Fundraising Update

**16** Swimming and Water-Based Exercise  
How water-based exercise may help when you have arthritis.

**18** Seasonal Recipes  
Emily Johnson, Arthritis Foodie author shares some lighter meal recipes for the summery days ahead.



**20** Ask the Team

**22** ARMA Healthcare Inequalities Report  
ARMA CEO Sue Brown introduces the latest report on health inequalities 'Act Now: Musculoskeletal Health Inequalities and Deprivation'.

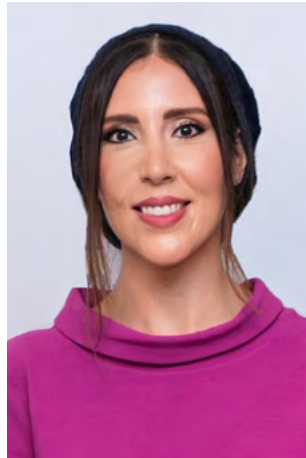
**23** Dressing for Style and Comfort with Arthritis  
The Able Label share advice and talk about adaptive clothing.



# Message from the Chair and Interim CEO



Dan Torjussen-Proctor, Chairman



Noha Al Afifi, Interim CEO

Dear Members,

Welcome to the first fully digital version of our Magazine. This is the first issue with Noha Al Afifi as Interim CEO and there is much to share!

We begin with our exciting and ambitious [new three-year strategy](#), outlining the Charity's plans to support people living with arthritis.

Over this period, we've seen a flurry of great national media coverage including several pieces in the Daily Telegraph and a feature in The Guardian on our Ambassador, Candida Doyle. Our regular podcast has gone from strength to strength, doubling listenership since launch and now in Season 3.

We have also renewed our relationship with ClearChannel who are promoting Arthritis Action via Adshells around the country on a pro bono basis. We are grateful for their ongoing support. Look out for the posters in your local area!

This year we have introduced a new Self-Management Event "Arthritis & Me" specifically aimed at a younger audience, as well as continuing our online events for people of all ages. [Find more about our latest events on page 10.](#)

We have launched a new Factsheet for employers and developed a specialist website area relating to employment and arthritis, as new flexible working regulations come into force ([more on page 11](#)), a real drive to improve health and wellbeing at work.

Finally, we have important information about our upcoming AGM and how to cast your vote in [the Membership article on page 5.](#)

We are grateful for your continued support. Your feedback on the services we provide help us ensure we remain relevant and impactful for the people we serve.

## Your Membership

### News

You will have noticed this magazine arriving in your inbox instead of on your doormat, it has all the usual features, just sent in electronic format. Our main priority remains to deliver great services to our Members, and to support people to live better with arthritis, using self-management techniques. We hope you enjoy this issue of our ever popular magazine! Don't forget, that you can click on links to directly visit all the services and pages referenced in our articles.

As per our recent communications, we wanted to let you know that the 2024 Annual General Meeting will be held at our London office on Wednesday 3rd July 2024. For convenience, Members will be able to vote by proxy if they do not wish

to attend. The relevant documents, voting papers and supporting information will be sent to you by post, approximately 6 weeks before the event.

We would also like to remind you that we recently had a £5 increase in your annual membership fee, in order for us to keep up with rising costs. This means that annual membership is now £25 and payment by direct debit £20 per year. Lifetime membership remains the same. [View renewal options here.](#)

We are also pleased to announce our new WhatsApp service. You can contact us by WhatsApp [via the website](#), or simply add **0770 281 3737** to your contacts. We're here to answer your membership questions and anything related to self-management. [Contact Us](#)



Image by Freepik

## Membership Services

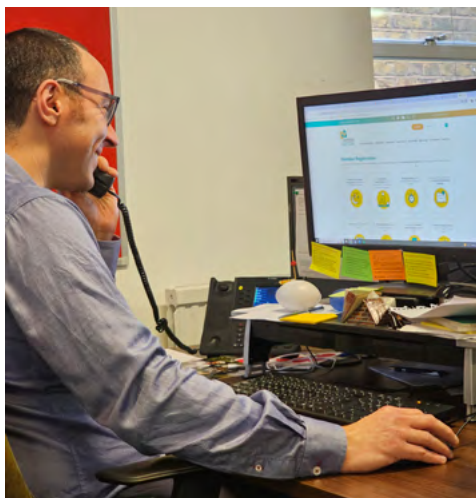
We would also like to take this opportunity to remind you of all we have on offer to Members. Please do get in touch if you would like to take advantage of any of these, Arthritis Action staff love to work with you to achieve your self-management goals. We can offer:

- **One-to-one services**

- **The Pathway** – work with Terry to outline personal goals, and a pathway to reach them.
- **Nutrition** – work with Martin to discover more about food and healthy eating.
- **Weight Management** – work with Martin to find out how to reach and maintain a healthy weight for you.
- **Associated Practitioner Service** – an opportunity to experience two subsidised treatments with an osteopath or a physiotherapist.
- **Arthritis Action Connect** – a telephone service run by trained Arthritis Action Members who can listen and talk with you about living with arthritis.

Here's what one of our lovely new Members said:

*"I am spreading the word about Arthritis Action as in the short time I have been with you, I have seen pain levels reduced and my mobility improved and it is all down to the Arthritis Action team. I am so grateful I found you".*



- **Social and Information Events and Exercise Opportunities**

- **Groups** – an opportunity to meet others and share hints and tips about how to live better with arthritis, as well as listen to specialist guest speakers.
- **Groups for the under 40s** – events focussed on a topic and Q&A.
- **Self-Management Events** – an opportunity to learn different techniques to manage your arthritis.
- **'Home Strength' Online Exercise Class** – a class to develop your body strength over 6 weeks, led by Martin.
- **Good Boost Move Together** – an opportunity to try exercises over a downloadable app, led by Marc.

If you want to find out more about our services and how we can support you, please don't hesitate to email us at [members@arthritisaction.org.uk](mailto:members@arthritisaction.org.uk), or call us on 020 3781 7120.

## What's New in Arthritis Research?

Dr Wendy Holden, Consultant Rheumatologist and Arthritis Action's Medical Advisor answers questions on two studies that have hit the headlines and what they may mean for patients:

**Q: Could current biological treatments for rheumatoid arthritis be used preventatively?**

**A:** recent trial showed that 1 year of abatacept, when used early in people who are at risk of developing rheumatoid arthritis, may delay or even stop some people from developing the condition after 1 year. This seems like exciting news but unfortunately by 2 years there was no difference in terms of level of inflammation in the joints, physical or emotional wellbeing, or work stability, compared to those who had a placebo medicine, meaning that any benefits of abatacept did not last. Unfortunately, abatacept can also be associated with serious side effects such as infections. Furthermore, predicting who will go on to develop rheumatoid arthritis is difficult to ascertain (over half the people who are at risk of developing rheumatoid arthritis, do not go on to do so). In the trial, 1 in 4 people did not take their medication as prescribed which probably reflects the fact that most people do not want to take a medicine that may not be needed. [Read study](#)

**Q: What is the potential for stem cell research in curing osteoarthritis?**

**A:** recent study by researchers in Australia caught the attention of medical professionals and patients alike with its promise of potentially curing osteoarthritis. The [study](#), published in Nature, discovered a type of stem cell that can divide and

make new tissue in cartilage. Loss of these stem cells can lead to a loss of cartilage which causes osteoarthritis in the knees of mice. This loss of cartilage can be improved or prevented with the use of a substance called fibroblast growth factor 18 (FGF-18).

This is promising news, for the first time showing that cartilage damage can be reversed by an injection in animals. Unfortunately, however, early trials of IGF-18 in people with osteoarthritis have not shown an improvement in their joint pain, stiffness and function emphasising that pain is complex and that loss of cartilage is not the only factor contributing to osteoarthritis pain.

While new research in arthritis is always welcome, more work needs to be done to understand both rheumatoid and osteoarthritis. For now, self-management is the only evidence-based and safe treatment which will help people with to manage pain and disability.

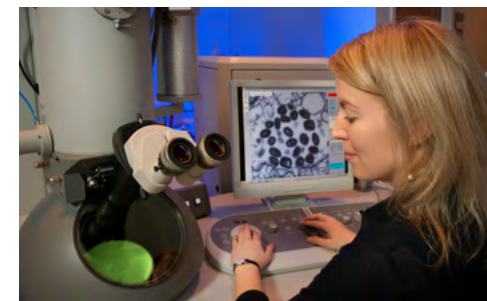


Image by CDC on Unsplash



# Member Spotlight: Nina's Journey

**IT Consultant Nina, 43, had lived with pain since her early teens, but only discovered effective treatment after a long journey to getting a diagnosis of seronegative inflammatory arthritis.**

Thinking back now, there has always been pain in at least one part of my body. It came to a head with issues I was having with my left ankle, which had been on and off for a while and then became quite debilitating.

It was a GP in-house physiotherapist I self-referred to, who joined some of the dots. Having coeliac disease and psoriasis, they asked if I had ever been assessed for arthritis and suggested a rheumatologist referral. I was finally diagnosed with seronegative inflammatory arthritis. They found signs of damage, in my ankles, fingers, collarbones, although the rest of my joints are painful when I'm in a flared state.

Next came the journey of finding the right treatment. This was complicated by gastric issues which limited my options. It was a biological treatment that proved the answer to dampening down most symptoms and helped me maintain a normal routine and manage daily life. I no longer wake up in pain, and my stiffness is reduced.

I am an IT Consultant heading up a team. My employers would like me in the



office 2 days a week, but they are very supportive if I just can't manage this. I was open with my HR department from the start as I knew I would need their assistance. They have been supportive, giving me access to counselling services, the support of the Access to Work Scheme, an occupational therapist referral, and provided a standing desk, ergonomic chair and dictation software. Their flexible attitude to my working from home, taking breaks to leave my desk has allowed me to continue my career.

It has been fantastic meeting others like me living with arthritis. Knowing that I wasn't being lazy, or dramatic about my situation - it was affirming hearing that. Even little things like recommending gadgets and adaptations, has all been so helpful.

I found that health professionals seemed to work in little boxes and didn't have the time to discuss all the things I needed at my appointments; this, in part, I feel, has caused the delay in my diagnosis. I asked about diet changes but was just told to look online. Having access to the Arthritis Action Dietitian Martin through my Membership was helpful.

I enjoy my holidays and find that a hotter and more humid environment, plus the space to relax and pace myself is very beneficial to my arthritis. I just have to pace myself and take an extra day or two to prepare for and recover from the travel itself!

I also love walking around the open spaces in my north London neighbourhood, before diagnosis I found my routes diminishing as I could

go less far without pain. Being out walking is so therapeutic for me, I clear my head, get some fresh air and see nature. It's a big part of my life and when flares were at their worst, not being able to even get up or down the stairs made me feel so penned in and really affected my mental health.

I missed my independence, so often things I wanted to do for myself I no longer could, like changing a tyre, a bit of DIY or just cooking a meal. My hands had hurt for many years, I would be in pain and drop things. I love cooking but pans were heavy, I just felt so clumsy.

My journey to getting diagnosed has taken the better part of my life, from back pain in childhood, the ankle pain that was seen as an isolated problem and my stiff hands. It has taken a very long time for all the pieces of the jigsaw to fit together. Now that I am on the right path with my treatment and I have the knowledge and support that Arthritis Action and its groups have provided, I can be more confident about my future.



# Groups and Events Update

In January we welcomed Area Co-ordinator Jo Staniforth to the events team, who joined Marc in facilitating our popular Online Arthritis Action Groups, and is responsible for co-ordinating networking and regional activities in the Midlands area.

Over the last few months, we were pleased to introduce a new format for holding some of our Online Groups, featuring a guest speaker and then hosting a Q&A session for the group participants. These have been very well received.

Some recent groups saw Member Services Manager Terry Urbanczyk talk about the importance of setting goals, Dietitian Martin Lau who spoke about nutrition and arthritis, a session with Jemma Hall from Talking Therapies regarding mental health services, and Services Manager Marc Williams on staying active with arthritis. You can find out about upcoming Groups, on our [events calendar on our website](#), or email us suggestions for topics you'd like to discuss, at: [events@arthritisaction.org.uk](mailto:events@arthritisaction.org.uk).

This February, we held the first of three 'Living Well with Arthritis' self-management events, that we will be holding this year. This was a roaring success with a great turn out, featuring a whole host of new faces. During the event, we covered an introduction to arthritis, tips on how to increase your physical activity and stay active,

having a healthier diet, managing your weight, pain management, working with healthcare professionals, and the importance of pacing.

The next 'Living Well with Arthritis' event will take place in June and the third will take place in the autumn, to be confirmed closer to the time.

We look forward to our next event in May, where Jo will lead a session about gardening when you have arthritis.

You can [book here](#).

To keep track of our activities, and to make sure you register for any of our free self-management events, and online groups, please visit our [events calendar](#), or email us at [events@arthritisaction.org.uk](mailto:events@arthritisaction.org.uk). You can also sign-up to receive our [monthly electronic newsletter 'eNews'](#), which features all upcoming events, as well as our latest news.



Image by Chris Montgomery on Unsplash

# Our Top Tips for Working Life

Work takes up a bigger chunk of our life than ever before, with the state retirement age creeping upwards. A third of the workforce in England are now aged 50 or over - nearly 9 million workers, and as many as 1 in 10 have a MSK condition, you are not alone!

Since the pandemic there has been a concerted effort by Government to get older workers back into employment and enable those that want to work to continue in employment. An amendment to the Flexible Working Regulations came into force on 6th April 2024, ensuring that employees could ask for flexible working from day one of their employment.

But what can you, as an employee, do to have a better working life while managing your arthritis:

- **Be open with your employer:** Often the stress of juggling work commitments and your arthritis can be the biggest challenge. Worry about taking time off, exhaustion and feeling like you are letting people down are very real. You may find that just having that chat with your employer helps to unburden some of that stress.
- **Explain your condition:** Most employers will not know very much about arthritis, so it is useful to explain how it affects you. This could include speaking about pain, how the condition can be variable, flares and fatigue, and that you may need to have time off to go to appointments.



Images by Centre for Aging Better

- **Ask about adjustments:** Employers should help with providing adjustments to your working environment and can get grants from the Access to Work Scheme for more expensive equipment.
- **Requesting flexible working:** Speak to your employer if you think flexible working would be helpful or the ability to work from home full-time, part-time or when you are having a flare. They have a duty to consider your request.
- **Make time for breaks:** Simple things like being allowed to take short breaks to get up and stretch or walk around are usually easy to organise and cost nothing.
- **Do some stretches:** Try some of our stretches when you take that break <https://www.arthritisaction.org.uk/top-stretches-when-working-from-home/>.



# Women, Hormones and Arthritis

## Dr Wendy Holden, looks at the role of hormones throughout a woman's life and how they impact on inflammatory conditions like arthritis

Some types of inflammatory arthritis, especially rheumatoid arthritis, are much more common in women - about 65% of people who have rheumatoid arthritis are female. No one knows why this is but hormones, especially oestrogen, as well as genetic and other environmental factors are likely involved.

### Pregnancy, periods and arthritis

Many women with inflammatory arthritis, such as rheumatoid and psoriatic arthritis, report that their joint pains are worse just before and during their period. This may be due to relatively low levels of oestrogen in the body during this time. When oestrogen levels are low, women often report more pain in experimental studies. For example, women given oestrogen during their period have less pain than those given a placebo. Similarly, at times of the month when oestrogen levels are highest just after ovulation, joint pains and swelling can often improve.

Some women may find their joints benefit from hormonal contraception, although clinical trials have been contradictory.

During pregnancy, about 1 in 3 women with inflammatory arthritis find that their

arthritis goes into remission, and for some this can last. For others, about 6 weeks after childbirth when oestrogen levels drop, there can be a significant flare of joint pain and swelling.

### Pre and post menopause

Women who are suddenly experiencing the menopause for medical reasons, for example after their ovaries are removed surgically or after medication which lowers oestrogen levels or treatment for breast cancer, can develop sudden joint pains within a few days or weeks. This is called 'menopausal arthralgia' and most commonly affects the hands and feet, though any joint can be impacted. About 50% of women who are prescribed anti-oestrogen aromatase inhibitors for breast cancer develop joint pains, and these pains can be so severe that many women consider stopping the treatment.

For women who experience a natural progression through peri-menopause, the effects of change can creep up around the age of 45-50, but the impact can be equally disabling. About 50% of menopausal and perimenopausal women are affected, however this issue is often overshadowed by other menopausal

symptoms, and can be dismissed as "normal" ageing, or early osteoarthritis.

Joint pains can wake some women at night, contribute to fatigue and cause difficulty with function, especially opening jars and lifting objects such as heavy pans. Osteoarthritis can affect the same joints as 'menopausal arthralgia', especially the thumbs and small finger joints and they both present around the same time in a woman's life. Oestrogen reduction during the menopause is also associated with worse sleep and mood changes, both of which can contribute to increased joint pain. So, working out which pain is which can be challenging! Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) can help many women and can be safely prescribed for most women using

different preparations, although it can take several months to feel the benefits. For women who are unable to use HRT, for example those with breast cancer or for those who prefer not to take HRT, menopausal arthralgia usually settles within a couple of years and will begin to stop once breast cancer medication treatment ends, although it can persist for many years.

All women of any age are encouraged to work at improving their muscle strength with resistance exercises, which in the hands can be as simple as squeezing a ball or lifting light weights. Stronger muscles will provide stability to joints and this can reduce joint pain. Eating a healthy diet can also help, as can looking after mental health and sleep.



Image by freepik

# Fundraising Update

## Thank You

We would like to thank everyone who has supported our fundraising at this time. In the last six months you have helped raise over £35,000 through gifts in memory, various challenges and runs, community events and donations in lieu of birthday presents! Your kindness makes a positive difference to those living with arthritis and is greatly appreciated.

We are particularly grateful to Denis Vaughan for taking on a year-long running challenge in 2024 where he plans to run 5k each month multiplied by the month number – yes that's 60k by December! He is doing this in support of his wife, Steph, an amazing nurse who sadly had to give up the job she loved dearly after dedicating her career to helping others, because of her arthritis. Good luck Denis and Steph!



We also wish good luck to our Edinburgh Marathon runners this coming May. If you would like to take part in any upcoming events, our Fundraising Manager, Iza

Seabrook will be happy to help you. Our [Fundraising Guide is available here](#) or you can receive it by emailing [fundraising@arthritisaction.org.uk](mailto:fundraising@arthritisaction.org.uk).

## Gift in Wills

We are very pleased to be able to offer a free Will-writing service to our Members and Supporters. Whether you are thinking of writing your first Will or need to update an existing Will, this might be a well-timed prompt. The National Free Wills Network offers in-person appointments with a local solicitor, while Farewill is an online Will-writing service. We also have a Gifts in Wills guide you might find useful, which covers common terms used by solicitors. You can request a copy from the fundraising team on 020 3781 7120.



## Nominate us

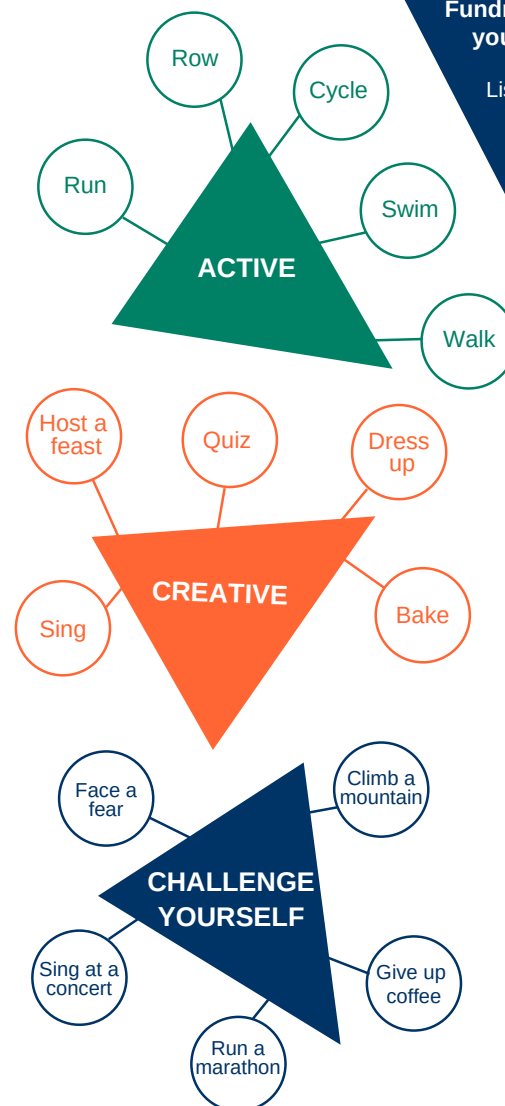
Finally, a reminder to nominate Arthritis Action for monthly token collection, at your local Tesco, Waitrose or ASDA supermarkets. We will happily help you with any applications and form-filling, so do not hesitate to contact Iza at [iza@arthritisaction.org.uk](mailto:iza@arthritisaction.org.uk).

# Fundraising Ideas

Pick the right challenge for you

Fundraising should be fun, so make sure you pick the right challenge for you.

Listed below are four easy steps to follow for any event you decide to organise or take part in.



1

### WHAT AND WHERE

Think about what you'd like to do and where. Can it be tracked on an app like Strava?

2

### WHEN

What is the best time to host your fundraiser? Events can work best over a weekend.

3

### WHO

Invite everyone you know, not just friends and family. Communities are an amazing support network. Word of mouth is a powerful force.

4

### HOW MUCH

Set yourself a target. It's a great motivation! Does your employer match funds raised?



# Swimming and Water-Based Exercise

## David Vaux, Arthritis Action's Head of Training and Register Osteopath answers this dilemma

One of the most common barriers to starting exercise, is not knowing how to start. Especially if in pain or having just been given a diagnosis of arthritis. Often the notion of exercise, or any movement, being the furthest thing from your mind. However, the truth is that it is through movement that pain often improves.

It is not surprising then, that many of those on long waiting lists to have surgery will often experience both pain and then loss of physical function due to their lack of daily movement. A waiting list is often taken by many to also mean a no move list.

So how should we approach exercise when in pain, if doing nothing feels like the safest option?

Well, you may be surprised to learn that much of our experience in dealing with how to move when in pain, has come from professional sports. If you have ever seen newsclips of your favourite sportsperson rehabilitating after an injury, you may have seen them on a zero-gravity treadmill, which allows the person to move without loading their painful or injured joints. Most of us do not have access to, or the ability to decamp to an Olympic or premier league medical facility! What I do often

recommend to my patients, however, is to make use of your local swimming pool, if you are lucky to have one in your area.

### Why do water-based activities work?

The supportive nature of water unweights our joints and allows previously immobile people to move more, often with no pain or aggravation of their condition. Just keeping it simple and walking – taking care not to walk straight into the deep end - will often improve joint stiffness and help strengthen the muscles around the joints without loading them.

Contact your local pool to find out what water-based exercise classes they may offer and whether they may be suitable for you. Failing this, you can try simply walking in the pool. No snorkel required!

### Update on our partnership with local leisure centres

As you may have read in previous issues, Arthritis Action has been part of a UKRI funded project for the last 14 months. We partnered with Good Boost and Escape Pain, setting out to understand if local leisure centres could provide support and exercise

opportunities for people with arthritis. Some of which is facilitated by Good Boost and their ground-breaking waterproof tablet rehab system.

We are currently waiting to hear if government funding will be offered to extend this project, which would enable

us and our partners to reach more leisure centres across the UK. We hope to have more news on this in the coming months in the hope that this great pool of resources – pardon the pun – will be available to many more people across the UK!



Image by pressfoto on Freepik

# Seasonal Recipes

Arthritis Foodie Author and Blogger Emily Johnson shares some delicious, lighter dishes for the summer months

Reproduced by kind permission of publishers Hodder from *Eat Well With Arthritis* by Emily Johnson (Yellow Kite, £25) out now

## Layered Mango and Passion Fruit Dessert

Easily made and stored in the fridge for you and for friends. Mango is rich in polyphenols, carotenoids and vitamin C, and a good source of dietary fibre, which have all exhibited anti-inflammatory properties. Several studies have demonstrated that the prebiotic effects of mango polyphenols and dietary fibre have the potential to lower intestinal inflammation.

Serves 4

### INGREDIENTS

- 1 mango
- 6 passion fruit
- ½ tsp vanilla extract
- 40g honey, or maple syrup
- 2 tsp coconut sugar
- 200g coconut yoghurt
- ½ tsp chia seeds
- Squeeze of lime juice
- 4 Tbsp desiccated coconut

### METHOD

1. Peel the mango and cut into small chunks. Place in a bowl with the flesh of the passion fruit.
2. Stir in the vanilla extract, honey and coconut sugar. Spoon into 4 glass containers, you should have around 95g in each one.
3. Chill in the fridge until you are ready to serve.
4. When ready to serve, top each serving with 50g of coconut yoghurt. Sprinkle with chia seeds, lime juice and desiccated coconut.



## Sweet Potato 'Hash Brown' Patties and Perfect Poached Eggs

Try this quick and easy go-to brunch at home with phytonutrient carotenoids from the sweet potatoes, which have been shown to help with inflammatory arthritis. This can also be made vegan by omitting the eggs and enjoying the fritters with a different topping, such as garlic mushrooms and spinach.

Serves 2-3 / Makes 6

### INGREDIENTS

- 2 small eggs, or to make it vegan, mix 2 Tbsp chia seeds or ground flaxseeds with 6 Tbsp water, and leave to stand for 5 minutes
- 2 large sweet potatoes
- 1 red onion
- 1 tsp garlic powder
- ½ tsp paprika
- ½ tsp sea salt
- ½ tsp black pepper
- 60g chickpea flour (can also use buckwheat or brown rice flour)
- 1-2 Tbsp extra virgin olive oil

### FOR THE TOPPINGS

- 1 avocado
- 4 eggs

### METHOD

1. Preheat the oven to 190°C, if you wish to bake the hash brown patty.
2. If using eggs, whisk them in a small bowl and set aside. If using the chia seed vegan 'egg', add to a bowl after letting it sit for 5'.
3. Finely peel and grate the sweet potatoes using the thinnest grating setting on your food processor, then place in sieve over a bowl. With the back of a spoon, press down on the grated sweet potato to release the excess water.



4. Finely chop the onion into half-moons and add to a separate large mixing bowl. Stir in the grated sweet potato.
5. Mix in all the seasoning, the flour, then add the beaten egg (or vegan 'egg').
6. To fry, add 1 tablespoon of oil to a large frying pan and, once hot, scoop the sweet potato mixture into the pan in 6-8 tight mounds. Flatten each one into a hash-brown patty shape with the back of a spatula and cook for 3-5' on each side until golden brown.
7. Alternatively, to bake, place the fritters on a baking sheet covered with baking parchment and bake in the oven for 20'. Flip and cook for a further 5-10'.
8. When you are halfway through cooking the patties, heat a pan of hot water until it bubbles. Turn the water down to a simmer with tiny rising bubbles visible and plop the eggs in using ramekins or mugs to prevent breaking (if using older eggs, add a splash of vinegar to the water). Time for exactly 3' for perfect poached eggs.
9. Smash or slice the flesh of the avocado in a small bowl.
10. Top your sweet potato fritters with the smashed avocado and poached eggs.



# Ask the Team



David Vaux, Osteopath and Arthritis Action's Therapies Manager and Exercise Lead



Martin Lau, Registered Dietitian and Arthritis Action's Services Development Manager

## Martin Lau, and David Vaux, answer your most frequently asked questions.

**Q: I have been diagnosed with knee arthritis and been told by my GP that I need to get more active and strengthen my muscles, but I have never been to a gym and I am afraid I will make things worse. What do you suggest?**

**A:** Your GP is correct, in that one of the best things you can do with arthritis is to find ways of keeping active. The challenge here is to find ways of doing so that do not aggravate your symptoms as not every exercise intervention will suit everyone's individual needs. Generally, the benefits of exercise outweigh the risks of inactivity, even when we have mobility issues. Remember that simply getting a little more active than you have been in the past will act to strengthen your whole body.

The best thing to do when you start out is to keep a record of how your body responds to any new or increased activities. This will help you make sense of the optimal time for you to be more active and when to rest. Keeping an exercise diary will give you invaluable insights in understanding what exercise is working for you.

I am a great advocate for using a swimming pool to walk in the shallow end, or indeed attend a locally run water-based exercise class. The supportive nature of the water often means that you can move your joints in ways that are not possible on dry land.

You do not need to go to a gym at this stage to improve your strength. There are many simple ways of getting stronger at home using your own body weight

or household items including our [chair based exercises](#). We run a regular home strength programme for our Members with our expert Martin Lau, which I thoroughly recommend as a great starting point. Perhaps find out when our next available classes will be running at [members@arthritisaction.org.uk](mailto:members@arthritisaction.org.uk).

**David**

**Q: My GP has said that I am overweight and been told to lose weight in order get my knee osteoarthritis better. I have come across this book about low carbohydrate diets. What's your view on these please?**

**A:** I am pleased you are taking a step into one of the most important aspects reviewing your diet, as recommended by clinical guidelines. There are so many

weight loss diets out there, is easy to get confused at the start of a weight management journey. Success in weight management encompasses two elements:

1. The initial weight loss, and
2. Keeping the weight off long term

Many weight loss diets work at first because the users are consuming less calories than they normally would. Low carb diets have been around for a long time and it's not anything magical. A diet low in carbohydrate can be easy to follow initially, but the bottom line is whether it is sustainable for you in the longer term. You need to identify changes that you can make that you can stick to - losing body fat and keeping it off is a slow process, there are no short cuts – but plenty of benefits!

**Martin**



Image by Wanderluster on iStock

# News from ARMA



Arthritis Action is one of 36 patient and professional organisations which make up the Arthritis and Musculoskeletal Alliance (ARMA). Working together we have a strong voice to call for improvements in services and support for people with arthritis and other musculoskeletal (MSK) conditions. ARMA's current priorities are work on health inequalities and improving local services.

## ARMA's 'Act Now' Report

The 'Act Now: Musculoskeletal Health Inequalities and Deprivation' report from ARMA highlights the impact of social and economic determinants of health on those living with MSK conditions, recognising that people in deprived areas face far greater challenges in managing their MSK conditions and accessing quality MSK services.

The report aims to address the drivers of poor musculoskeletal health acting on people living in deprivation and bring a focus to the part health services across the UK can play to address inequalities.

The report provides practical advice and signposting for health systems, MSK services and practitioners in a position to shift the dial in the right direction and implement innovative strategies to overcome barriers to healthcare access and tackle unequal health outcomes in MSK health. We all hope it will lead to changes in services to reduce these inequalities.

You can read the full report [here](#).



## Mapping local services

ARMA are also approaching all local health systems in England, using a freedom of information request, asking them about their priorities for musculoskeletal services. The results will be used to highlight areas which are underperforming, and to help everyone, including Arthritis Action better target our work to reach and help more people living in pain.

# Dressing for Style and Comfort with Arthritis

Dressing is a means of showing our personality but the struggle of daily dressing can leave many living with arthritis feeling stressed and worn out. Adaptive clothing can help to manage and overcome a variety of dressing difficulties including reduced dexterity and joint discomfort. Discrete adaptations to clothes can transform lives, give back confidence, and help to maintain independence.

Our partners at the Able Label share key tips for dressing:

- Find front opening designs to avoid uncomfortable overhead dressing, especially if you experience stiffness
- For those with arthritis in the hands, fastenings such as buttons and zips can prove particularly tricky, substitute these for adaptive alternatives such as VELCRO® designed to open and close with ease
- For greater well-being and comfort, choose fabrics which move with the body rather than against. Stretch fabrics including jerseys, and viscose with elastane, help make getting in and out of clothes much easier
- Looser, wider fitting shapes and relaxed clothing can provide comfortable and stylish layering without feeling restricted
- For outerwear, bulky fastenings and stiff fabrics can make dressing

restrictive. Slippery and silky lining can help you to slide on styles without having to manoeuvre limbs too much

- Dress in a seated position or with the support of a rail or handle
- Use dressing aids for extra help eg, a long handled shoe horn
- Wash adapted garments that utilise VELCRO® with fastenings closed to maintain strength and avoid them becoming damaged

The Able Label clothes can be purchased online at [www.theablelabel.com](http://www.theablelabel.com). If you have arthritis, you can claim VAT relief on The Able Label clothes as a long-term condition. [Find out more here](#).

Arthritis Action Members can get 10% off their first order with code: ART10 and by using this code, they will also donate and additional 10% of the sale to Arthritis Action.



Credit: The Able Label



# Support Us

Thanks to the last 80 years of Gifts in Wills, we have been able to support thousands of people living with arthritis. Leaving a gift in your Will is one of the most impactful actions you can take.

You can write a simple Will online with support from Farewill. To redeem your free online Will, visit: [www.farewill.com/arthritis-action](http://www.farewill.com/arthritis-action) and the voucher free code will be applied at the checkout. You can also contact Farewill on 020 8176 6708.

If you prefer speaking to a solicitor, the National Free Wills Network will be able to help. We can refer you to them, simply email our Fundraising Manager, Iza Seabrook on [iza@arthritisaction.org.uk](mailto:iza@arthritisaction.org.uk).

Thank you!