

Inflammatory Arthritis? Have you got the 'S' Factor?

Have you got... The S factor?

Stiffness
Early morning joint stiffness lasting over 30 minutes

Swelling
Persistent swelling of one joint or more, especially hand joints

Squeezing
Squeezing the joints is painful in inflammatory arthritis

This could be inflammatory arthritis
See your doctor now!
Delay can cause long term disability

For further information see www.arthritisresearchuk.org

Arthritis Research UK
The Primary Care Rheumatology Society

Have you got... The S factor?

Spinal pain & stiffness in a young adult
Spinal pain & stiffness lasting more than 3 months in a young adult could be inflammatory if you tick 4 out of 5 boxes:

- It started before the age of 40
- It started slowly: it did not come on suddenly
- You have noticed improvement with exercise
- There is no improvement with rest
- You experience pain at night with improvement on getting up!

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- **Stiffness** - Early morning joint stiffness lasting more than 30 minutes
- **Swelling** - Persistent swelling of one joint or more, especially hand joints
- **Squeezing** - Squeezing the joints is painful in inflammatory arthritis

If you have any symptoms highlighted in the poster which might possibly relate to either [rheumatoid arthritis](#), [psoriatic arthritis](#) or [ankylosing spondylitis](#), which are the three most common forms of inflammatory arthritis, then seek help from your GP, don't delay.

This is a public awareness campaign

Developed by the Rheumatology Futures Project Group (RFPG) and endorsed and supported by Arthritis Research UK, the Royal College of GPs and The Primary Care Rheumatology Society.

The RFPG are also hoping for Department of Health backing for this campaign which was one of the key recommendations in the National Audit Office Report published in July 2009.

Please [download the poster](#) and ask your GP surgery, your library, local pharmacy or any other public place if they will display it or [contact Arthritis Research UK](#) and they will send you some.

The Rheumatology Futures Project Group (RFPG)

The RFPG is a coalition of patient and professional organisations representing the entire rheumatology community (primary care, secondary care, consultants, GPs, nurses and allied health professionals, patient organisations) and the pharmaceutical industry.

The RFPG was specifically formed in 2007 to develop and execute a collaborative and clearly-defined programme of work to identify barriers to providing high-quality rheumatology services for people with rheumatoid arthritis (RA) across England, and to explore what high quality care should look like and how it could be delivered and was limited to a three year, time limited project which ends summer 2010.

For more information about rheumatoid arthritis, ankylosing spondylitis and psoriatic arthritis and the organisations who can help, please read on ...

What is Rheumatoid Arthritis?

Rheumatoid Arthritis (RA) is a chronic, progressive and disabling auto-immune disease affecting approximately 690,000 people in the UK adult population. It is a disease in which the immune system attacks the tissue within the joint, leaving it painful and inflamed. If left untreated, the joint can lose its shape and alignment, and can eventually become unstable and ultimately, completely destroyed. It is a painful condition, and can lead to disability (this varies between individuals and depends on how severe/aggressive the disease is) and ultimately can affect a person's ability to carry out activities of daily living. The disease can progress very rapidly (again the speed of progression varies widely between individuals) or more slowly, causing swelling and damaging cartilage and bone around the joints. Any joint may be affected but it is commonly the hands, feet and wrists. It is a systemic disease which means that it doesn't just affect joints, it can affect the whole body and internal organs (although this is not the case for everyone with RA) such as the lungs, heart and eyes.

It affects approximately 3 times more women than men and onset is generally between 40 - 60 years of age although it can occur at any age. There are around 12,000 children under the age of 16 with the juvenile form of the disease. We do not know what causes it although various ideas include environmental triggers such as virus, infection, stress, trauma have been suggested. Cigarette smoking is an important precipitating factor. Furthermore, smoking makes the outlook for the RA worse. So far, we cannot cure it, but we now understand much more about the inflammatory process and how to manage it. RA is a lot more common than leukaemia and multiple sclerosis. However, because RA and its effects are not well publicised, awareness of the severity of the condition tends to be restricted to those who are directly affected or their carers and relatives.

The good news is that the prognosis today, if diagnosed and treated early, is significantly better than it was 20-30 years ago and many people have a much better quality of life in spite of having RA.

RA is economically costly. In fact the economic burden of RA in terms of loss of productivity amounts to £8 billion¹. We now know that uncontrolled RA increases mortality through an increased risk of

cardiovascular disease such as heart attacks and strokes; again the need for early treatment is imperative.

Reference:

1 National Rheumatoid Arthritis Society Economic Burden of RA Report 2010

Organisations who can help:

Arthritis Care

Arthritis Care exists to support people with all forms of arthritis. They are the UK's largest charity working with and for all people who have arthritis.

Helpline No. 0808 800 4050 Email: info@arthritiscare.org.uk

website: www.arthritiscare.org.uk

Arthritis Research UK

Arthritis Research UK is the charity leading the fight against arthritis by funding high class research, providing information and campaigning.

Phone: 01246 558033 email: enquiries@arthritisresearchuk.com

Website: www.arthritisresearchuk.org

National Rheumatoid Arthritis Society (NRAS)

National Rheumatoid Arthritis Society is the only charity which focuses specifically on providing support, help and information for people with Rheumatoid Arthritis and Juvenile Idiopathic Arthritis, their families, friends and carers, and health professionals with an interest in Rheumatoid Arthritis.

Helpline: 0800 298 7650 Gen. Enquiries: **0845 458 3969 / 01628 823524**

Email: enquiries@nras.org.uk website: www.nras.org.uk

What is Ankylosing Spondylitis?

Ankylosing spondylitis (AS) is an inflammatory condition of the spine which produces pain, stiffness, deformity and disability throughout adult life. Those most severely affected may develop the characteristic fused, curved spine of AS which means that they cannot lift or turn their head easily and this has a major impact on their life and their ability to form simple tasks like crossing the road safely. AS may also affect the eyes, lungs, bowel, skin and heart.

The disease usually starts in the late teens or early twenties: the average age when symptoms start is 24.

AS is a chronic progressive condition: it is usually experienced as a background level of disease against which people experience periods when symptoms are more severe called flares.

It affects more men than women: around 1 in 200 men is affected and 1 in 500 women. However it is difficult to produce accurate figures because it is a condition which is challenging to diagnose and often overlooked. The Department of Health's figures is that there are 200,000 people diagnosed with AS in the UK. (Source: Department of Health: The Musculoskeletal Services Framework 2006).

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Website: www.arthritisresearchuk.org

National Ankylosing Spondilitis Society (NASS)

NASS is the only registered charity in the UK working exclusively for people with AS and their families.

Phone: 020 8948 9117 Email: admin@nass.co.uk

Website: www.nass.org.uk

What is Psoriatic Arthritis?

Psoriatic arthritis is an inflammatory joint disease associated with psoriasis. Like all arthritis, psoriatic arthritis can cause stiffness, pain and lack of movement in affected areas. It most commonly affects the joints in the hands and feet, but can also cause inflammation, swelling and pain in larger joints, including the knees, elbows, hips and the spine. The inflammation in psoriatic arthritis can also affect the tendons (the fibrous tissue that attaches the muscle to the bone).

Symptoms of psoriatic arthritis range from mild to severe and can wax and wane in a similar way to skin psoriasis. Psoriatic arthritis usually affects the joints that are closest to the nail (distal joints) in both the fingers and the toes. The lower back, wrists, knees and ankles, alongside the neck, shoulders and elbows may also be affected. There are five subgroups of psoriatic arthritis, although there is some overlap between the groups.

Psoriasis is a common skin condition affecting 2-3% of the population of the UK and Ireland. An estimated 5-7% of people with psoriasis have psoriatic arthritis. This figure can increase to approximately 40% in people who have severe psoriasis. Men and women are equally likely to develop psoriatic arthritis with the peak onset being between the ages of 30 and 50 years (however psoriatic arthritis can occur at any age). In most cases (70%) psoriasis precedes psoriatic arthritis, in 15% of cases the skin and joint conditions occur at the same time and in the remaining 15% psoriatic arthritis is present before the skin condition psoriasis appears. There is no specific test for psoriatic arthritis. Diagnosis is made by looking for a history of psoriasis in you or your family, together with arthritis and inflammation in at least one joint. The pattern of the disease is also assessed to see if your symptoms fall into one of the subsets of psoriatic arthritis. It is worth noting that people with psoriasis can also develop other forms of arthritis such as rheumatoid arthritis and osteoarthritis.

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Website: www.arthritisresearchuk.org

The Psoriasis and Psoriatic Arthritis Alliance

The Psoriasis and Psoriatic Arthritis Alliance is a UK registered charity dedicated to helping people affected by psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis.

Phone: 01923 672837 Email: info@papaa.org

Website: www.papaa.org

The Psoriasis Association

The Psoriasis Association is the leading national membership organisation for people affected by psoriasis - patients, families, carers and health professionals.

Phone: 08456 760076 Email mail@psoriasis-association.org.uk

Website: www.psoriasis-association.org.uk