

My Health Care Team

Managing arthritis is a team effort. There are many different health care providers who may be part of your team. Who is on your team may change over time and will depend on your needs, the services available where you live, and your personal health beliefs and practices.

What is your role on the health care team?

You are the most important member of your team. It's your role to:

- Learn about your arthritis and the many ways it can be managed
- Talk to your team about your needs and treatment goals so together you can find ways of managing your arthritis that fit you
- Learn about the services that can help
- You know your body best and what does –or does not- feel right for you. Share this information with your health care team

How can the Mary Pack Arthritis team help?

We have a variety of health care providers and services to help you manage and treat the physical and emotional impacts of arthritis. Learn about our team of health care professionals below:

Rheumatologist

- Takes a medical history, examines you, orders tests and diagnoses your condition(s)
- Assess and treat non-musculoskeletal manifestations of systemic autoimmune rheumatic disease
- Works with you and your family doctor to achieve treatment goals (no swelling or pain) and monitor your condition
- Prescribes medications and treatments for arthritis & related health conditions

Do I need to see my rheumatologist?

1. Do I have ongoing swelling, pain and stiffness in bones, joints or muscles related to autoimmune disease or inflammatory arthritis?
2. Am I having any problems with the medications or finding them not helpful in controlling my swelling and pain.
3. Am I taking medication that requires regular monitoring? (such as immunosuppressive treatment)
4. Do I need regular monitoring of my nerves, blood vessels or major organs related to autoimmune disease or inflammatory arthritis?

Physical Therapist (PT)

- Assesses your day-to-day physical function, strength, mobility, balance and level of fitness
- Teaches you ways to reduce your pain using heat, cold and other strategies
- Prescribes tailored exercise programs, guidance and additional treatments such as manual therapy appropriate for your condition
- Works with you to improve and maintain joint motion, flexibility, muscle strength, balance, and overall physical activity

Do I need to see a PT?

1. Am I having difficulty standing, walking or doing daily activities due to joint pain, stiffness or muscle weakness?
2. Am I concerned about my balance or falling?
3. Do I have questions about what types of exercises to do and how to get started?

Occupational Therapist (OT)

- Assesses your ability to do your daily activities (such as personal care, cooking, housework, school, volunteer and paid work)
- Helps you find solutions to improve your quality of life and independence
- Recommends and provides joint protection strategies, adaptive equipment, hand splints and foot orthotics to support joints, improve ability to move, and reduce pain

Do I need to see an OT?

1. Am I having difficulty doing daily activities at home, work or school? (e.g., getting meals, getting dressed, having a bath, tying shoes, or using a computer)
2. Do I have issues with using my hands?
3. Do I struggle with managing pain or fatigue (tiredness)?

Rheumatology Nurse

- Provides supportive counseling & education on your condition, medications, treatment options, and health concerns
- Teaches you skills such as self-injection, medication management and dealing with potential side effects, how to talk to your health care team, and wellness strategies to live a healthy lifestyle
- Provides support on navigating the health care system

Do I need to see a nurse?

1. Would I like to talk to a nurse for advice or support?
2. Am I confused about my medications and how they work?
3. Do I need some help in coping with this condition?

Social Worker

- Connects you and family members to community resources
- Helps you deal with practical concerns in life, including housing, financial and family worries
- Provides professional counselling services to help you better cope with the adjustment to living with arthritis

Do I need to see a social worker?

1. Have I been feeling sad or overwhelmed lately?
2. Do I have money or housing worries?
3. Would I benefit from seeing a professional counsellor to talk about how I am feeling about having arthritis in my life.