

August-September 2026

Community outreach

August was a big month for AONT, delivering 4 information sessions across Darwin and Alice Springs. Featured in the print version of COTA's Seniors Month calendar, more than 50 people attended - thank you COTA for this support!

Sessions presented:

- Understanding and managing arthritis and osteoporosis (Alice Springs and Darwin)
- Taking the first step - becoming more active (Alice Springs)
- Pain self-management program (Alice Springs)

We also had a stall at COTA's Alice Springs Seniors Expo, where over 45 people stopped by for a chat and/or to collect materials. The Alice Springs community was very appreciative of our presence, both at the Expo and in providing the information sessions – lots of new faces, great questions and strong interest from the wider community in learning how to live better with arthritis and osteoporosis.

Thanks to Arthritis Australia for funding this trip.



Photo supplied courtesy of COTA NT

Membership renewal

It's that time of the year again, annual membership falling due in July.

Thank you to those members who have already renewed. For those who haven't, a personalised renewal notice is included with this newsletter.

Renewals may be made in person, over the phone, using the internet or by post.

We appreciate the long term support of many of our members, and look forward to hearing from you.



Inside

P2,3 Does exercise make pain better

P4,5 Love the skin you are in

p6 Arthritis Australia news

p6 Tai chi for arthritis

p7 Tune pasta bake

Does Exercise Make Pain Better or Worse?

Physical activity is essential for human health, and it can also be a powerful tool to help manage pain. There should be no barriers to accessing something as free as exercise.

Question 1: Why are doctors telling me to exercise?

Physical activity is important for those suffering from chronic pain for the same reasons it's important for everyone else:

- it is proven to protect against the development, or worsening of many health conditions such as heart disease, type 2 diabetes, lung diseases, osteoporosis, dementia, depression, anxiety and some cancers;
- increases and maintains fitness and strength to continue enjoyment and independence of everyday activities.
- improves longevity and quality of life.

And **exercise is also proven to help manage pain**. It can make a big difference to your chronic pain or injury.

Question 2: How does exercise help pain?

Exercise can be used to address many factors that contribute to pain. like sleep, mental health and general muscle tension.

- Exercise gets your heart rate up and releases **endorphins**, commonly known as “happy chemicals”. They are our natural pain killers. Other chemicals released with exercise can also help block pain.
- Exercise can improve your **sleep**.
- Exercise can **help manage stress**.
- Exercise can increase your tolerance of discomfort.

Question 3: What is the best exercise to do for pain?

There is no ‘one size fits all’ exercise for people with chronic pain.

The best thing to do is to **find what works for you**.

Common options are stretching and mobility movements (such as yoga), walking, walking in water, or swimming, but a strength exercise can be just as effective.

Consider what you enjoy and what your goals are.

Exercises should be focused on specific movements you need to get back to your usual activity. These might not provide pain relief initially but will have long term benefits for your quality of life.

The best exercises are:

- Exercises you enjoy
- Exercises that make you feel strong and confident
- Exercises specific to your goals

You can also consider exercising in a group or with a friend. Bonus: pick people you really get along with or those with a sense of humour so you can get some laughter too (double endorphins, proven to help manage pain!).



Question 4: If it's safe, why does exercise increase my pain?

There are a few ways exercise can increase pain and it's important to be mindful of these when exercising with chronic pain:

- Doing too much exercise. If you haven't exercised for a while, find an amount you can cope with and build from there.
- If you do not believe you are safe, your whole being will rally against it. Learning about pain and the body can help update our beliefs and help us feel safe.
- Fear of movements and stress causing more injury or fear of pain itself. Reducing our fear of pain or our fear of exercising with pain can help manage our pain.
- Some pain is normal and expected and can even be a good thing. If it's a new pain, seek help from your health practitioner.

Consider other aspects of your life which may be increasing your pain, not just the most recent exercise. How is your stress, mood, sleep, diet?



Exercise and pain: Where to start

The best exercises to start with will be what you can tolerate: specific movements, how many repetitions and for how long. Two things that will make a huge difference are to **relax and breathe!** Pain can cause conscious and unconscious movement compensations including excessive bracing and muscle tension which are actually perpetuating pain.

Consider working with an Accredited Exercise Physiologist who can:

- teach you the science of pain and injury
- different ways to manage pain,
- how to manage activity through pacing.
- help you start and progress your exercise routine to manage and reduce your pain.

Written by Biara Webster, Accredited Exercise Physiologist (AEP) since 2011. Biara works at **Sydney Spine Institute**, specialising in the biopsychosocial management of chronic pain.

<https://exerciseright.com.au/articles/does-exercise-make-chronic-pain-better-or-worse/> July 17, 2024

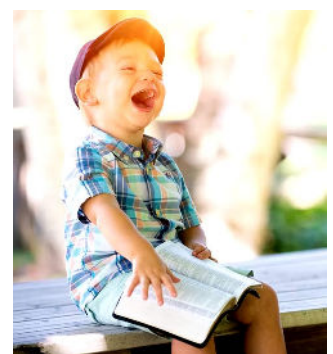
To find an exercise physiologist in Darwin go to: <https://www.healthshare.com.au/directory/exercise-physiologists-in-darwin-0800-nt/>

There are also exercise physiologists in Alice Springs and other places in the NT.

Count your age with friends, not years.

Count your life by smiles, not tears.

John Lennon



Love the Skin You're In

Adapted from Arthritis Matters April 2026, Arthritis & Osteoporosis Tasmania newsletter

Our skin is a complex organ that acts as a robust, waterproof barrier against the outside world, helping to heal scratches, cuts and bumps that affect its surface, by creating scabs or scar tissue.

It is made up of some three hundred million cells, 20% of our body weight. Thirty thousand cells are shed every minute and the skin renews itself every twenty eight days. These discarded cells make up a half of all of the dust in our homes.

The skin acts as our body's first line of defense against viruses and bacteria, regulates our body temperature, helps to maintain its balance of fluids, identifies sensations, and protects us from UV radiation and external hazards including chemicals and pollution.

The skin also has its own community of microorganisms that help to fight infection, control inflammation, and assist the immune system to recognise threats.



So, the least we can do is give this complex organ all of the respect and assistance it deserves.

It also plays a key role as a part of our immune system responding to infections and communicating to other parts of the immune system that we have an invader on board. Sometimes, the skin's immune system can become dysregulated and contribute to various skin conditions such as eczema, and it can be affected by systemic conditions.

A significant number of people who have joint-related symptoms will have skin involvement. Here are just a few of the types of arthritis or chronic musculoskeletal conditions that, in addition to joint related symptoms, can affect the skin:

- Osteoarthritis: the skin can become dry and scaly, with the possibility of rashes, sores and ulcers.
- Rheumatoid Arthritis: skin related symptoms can include the development of nodules (firm lumps under the skin), rashes, sores and/or inflammation of the blood vessels that carry oxygen and nutrients to the skin.
- Juvenile Idiopathic Arthritis (JIA): children can develop a salmon coloured rash with small pimples or swellings on the skin. This is an important clinical feature and diagnostic sign of JIA.
- Psoriatic Arthritis: this condition is commonly associated with psoriasis, a chronic skin condition characterised by itchy, scaly patches (plaques) and rashes. Different parts of the body can be involved, including nail involvement with nail pitting, thickening or lifting from the nail bed.
- Lupus Erythematosus: the characteristic butterfly-shaped rash, called a malar, can develop across the cheeks and nose and/or round scaly rashes appear anywhere on the body.
- Gout: changes in the skin can occur, including redness and discolouration.

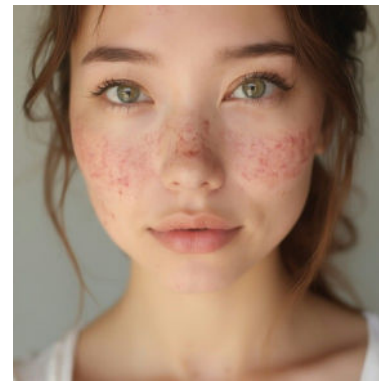
In all of the aforementioned conditions, as with other types of arthritis or chronic musculoskeletal conditions, the skin can become extremely sore as joints and/or connective tissues become hot and inflamed.

Some of the medicines used to treat these conditions can have an impact on the skin making it more sensitive to sunlight (photosensitive) and more prone to developing skin cancers.

Always be sure to check Consumer Medical Information (CMI) for the medicines that you take to see if there are skin related precautions or warnings, and be sure to mention these to your doctor if they develop. It is crucial to monitor your skin for any new or unusual skin-related symptoms as these could indicate changes in the underlying condition or the safety or effectiveness of its treatment.

Some strategies for looking after our skin, whether we have arthritis or not, include:

- **Diet:** nutrition can have a significant effect on skin health. Eating a diet rich in antioxidants, omega 3 fatty acids and vitamins (particularly A, C and E) will support the skin.
- **Hydration:** the skin is largely composed of water. Staying adequately hydrated is essential for supporting the skin's protective barrier, assisting with cell turnover and repair, flushing out toxins, delivering nutrients, and reducing itchiness and discomfort
- **Sleep:** during sleep skin cells undergo intensive repair and regeneration after the day's exposure to environmental stressors.
- **Stress:** some hormones can lead to skin-related issues and can also weaken the skin's protective barrier.
- **Sun Protection:** UV light causes damage to the skin, accelerating ageing and increasing the risk of skin cancer. Always use a sun block or broad spectrum sunscreen (SPF 30 or above), and a hat to cover the scalp. There is no safe way to tan (indoors or outdoors) without damaging the skin. If you are on medications that cause photosensitivity, wear long-sleeved tops and long pants when in the sun.
- **Smoking:** chemicals in tobacco smoke accentuate many skin problems.
- **Exercise:** sweating during exercise flushes toxins from the skin, increases blood flow which delivers oxygen and essential nutrients to the skin.
- **Skin Checks:** regular skin checks are crucial for the early detection of skin cancer and other skin issues. Skin cancer is one of the most common cancers worldwide, and particularly so in Australia.
- **Moisturising:** use gentle, fragrance free moisturisers to prevent skin dryness and flakiness. Night time is the best time for the skin to absorb moisturisers. Avoid scratching or rubbing your skin if it is itchy, use cold compresses instead.
- **Use hypoallergenic skincare products** and avoid harsh or highly perfumed laundry products.



Your skin is an absolute marvel, treat it with the respect that it deserves, and love the skin that you are in!

Arthritis Australia News

New brand

Arthritis Australia has adopted a new sign: a helping hand, a hand offered in support, and a hand reaching forward – the values at the heart of their advocacy, research and community.



As an affiliate we have also adopted the sign to replace the old one — it is on our letterhead, the top of each page in our newsletter and will appear in our website. It represents the importance of our relationship with Arthritis Australia

New website

As part of their rebranding, Arthritis Australia has also launched a new website. Check it out at <https://arthritisaustralia.org.au/>.

Research

Research plays a very important part of what Arthritis Australia does. Research grants are made available for as much research as possible. Currently arthritis costs our health system \$16bn a year but receives only 3.6% of national medical research funding.

So Arthritis Australia was delighted to receive the news on 11 June 2026 that \$100 million will be dedicated to an Arthritis and Musculoskeletal Research Mission over 10 years. This will be dedicated to filling gaps in research which will be very valuable to sufferers of arthritis.

Tai Chi for Arthritis and falls prevention (TCAFP)

TCAFP is a Tai Chi form developed by Dr Paul Lam which consists of gentle stretches and relaxing movements to assist with balance, flexibility and mental calmness. This style of Tai Chi is very gentle and suitable for beginners.

Classes are being offered in Darwin by Ann Connelly, Accredited Tai Chi instructor with Tai Chi for Health Institute, and an Occupational Therapist with over 40 years' experience. The class is carried out standing with seating available for rest breaks.



When: Wednesdays 10.30 -11.30.

Current term: July 29 to September 16, 2026.

Where: Air-conditioned venue on Robinson Road, Millner. Address supplied upon booking as participant numbers are limited due to venue size.

Cost: \$12 per class with payment by cash or electronic funds transfer.

Casual attendance is welcome at any time during the term.

Participants need to wear comfortable clothes and bring a water bottle. There is no floor work in Tai Chi. Please contact Ann on 0413 497 916 with any enquiries.

Tuna pasta bake

Healthy Living NT Territory Way June 2026

This is another recipe from Healthy Living which shows how you can modify a recipe to make it more healthy.



Original ingredients	Modifications	Modified ingredients
4 tbsp butter	Replace with olive oil to reduce saturated fats and sodium	¼ cup extra virgin olive oil
¼ cup plain flour		¼ cup plain flour
2 ½ cups full cream milk	Reduce saturated fats by using light milk	2 ½ cups light milk
1 cup grated tasty cheese	Use light cheese to further reduce saturated fats and sodium	1 cup grated light tasty cheese
4 cups cooked penne pasta	Reduce carbohydrates and increase vegetable serves by replacing half the pasta with non-starchy vegetables and leafy greens	2 cups penne pasta, 1 medium onion, peeled and diced, 3 cups frozen broccoli, 120 g rocket
425 g tuna chunks in oil	Use tuna in springwater to reduce total fat	425 g tin tuna in springwater

Method:

1. Preheat oven to 180°C fan-forced or 200°C conventional.
2. Microwave, steam or boil frozen vegetables until thawed and warm, set aside.
3. Using a small amount of olive oil, cook onion until slightly coloured, set aside.
4. To make the sauce, first add olive oil to a saucepan and heat until warm.
5. Gradually add flour to saucepan and mix using a whisk or wooden spoon to form a paste.
6. Add ½ cup of milk, stirring constantly to prevent lumps. As the sauce thickens, add more milk (about ½ cup at a time) and continue stirring until it starts to get thick again. Repeat this step until you have used up all of the milk.
7. Remove sauce from the heat and set aside.
8. Add pasta, sauce, tuna, vegetables and half of the cheese to a large oven proof baking dish, stir to mix.
9. Top with the remaining grated cheese and bake for 20 minutes or until the cheese is golden brown.
10. Serve with lemon juice or wedges, and pepper to taste.

About us and what we do:

- Respond to walk in, telephone and email enquiries
- Provide personalised information packs in response to enquiries
- Host regular information sessions: Call the office on 8948 5232 for more details and to reserve a spot on our upcoming sessions.
 - ⇒ **Friday 18 September 9.30 am to 1 pm “What a Pain!”**
 - ⇒ **Friday 16 October 10 am to 12 pm “Taking the first step”**
 - ⇒ **Friday 20 November 10 to 11.30 am “Understanding and managing arthritis and osteoporosis”**
- Provide information stands at a range of forums throughout the year
- Deliver presentations to community groups
- Keep in touch with other community health organisations and the services they provide
- Deliver bulk materials on request to a range of health services
- Produce this newsletter six times a year
- Liaise with Arthritis Australia, interstate arthritis affiliates and Healthy Bones Australia
- Make applications for various small grants to assist with special projects

The Arthritis Foundation of the Northern Territory Inc.
 Trading as **Arthritis & Osteoporosis NT**
 ABN 67 099 326 608

Patron

Patron: Ms Ruth Jones
 RN, BANurs, GradCertOrtho, GradDipHealthEd, MOrtho

Find us at

Shop 18 Rapid Creek
 Business Village,
 48 Trower Rd Millner
 PO Box 452,
 Nightcliff 0814
 www.aont.org.au
 facebook.com/
 arthritis.osteoporosis.nt

We are open

9:30am – 2:00pm
 Monday to Thursday
 (excluding Public Holidays)

Contact us

Freecall: 1800 011 041
 (08) 8948 5232
 info@aont.org.au

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Thanks to the Karama
 electorate office for
 assistance with printing
 this newsletter.

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