



February - March 2026

.... and best wishes to all our continuing and new members for a safe, healthy and happy 2026.

We aim to publish six issues of this newsletter each year. We hope you find them interesting and informative. If you have any suggestions for features and articles to include, we would be very pleased to hear from you. Ring us on 8948 5232 or email info@aont.org.au.

Introducing our patron

For the last three years Professor Hugh Heggie and his partner Ms Ruth Jones have been our Joint Patrons. Last November, when we were advised that Professor Heggie was finishing his term as Administrator the Board decided unanimously to ask Ms Jones to be our new Patron because of her great interest in and support of our work.



Ruth Jones is a Nurse Manager at the Royal Darwin Hospital where she has worked for over 35 years. Her career has focused on orthopaedic trauma, education, health service management, and quality improvement, reflecting her long-standing passion for musculoskeletal health.

A strong advocate for healthy ageing, mobility, and community wellbeing, Ruth is dedicated to supporting Territorians living with osteoporosis and arthritis.

Her lifelong love of nature, fitness, and active living embodies the values she champions as Patron of Arthritis and Osteoporosis NT.

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Benefits of tracking your arthritis pain and progress

From: The Arthritis Movement (Arthritis Queensland) <https://www.arthritis.org.au/>

Managing arthritis is a journey that involves much more than just treating physical symptoms. Tracking arthritis pain allows you to monitor patterns and factors in your symptoms over time that may be influencing how you feel.

Why track your arthritis pain?

- **To identify triggers**

Pain and flare-ups can be influenced by numerous factors, including certain activities, stress, or weather changes. Tracking helps you identify these triggers and make adjustments to avoid or manage them better.



- **To recognise patterns**

Observing patterns in your symptoms can be helpful. For example, you might notice that your pain tends to increase after certain activities or that stiffness is worse in the mornings.

It's also great to note activities that are beneficial at minimising your pain and arthritis symptoms. By doing this, you'll be able to see if particular behaviours or activities (for example, exercise, diet, social outings), can help reduce your symptoms. Recognising these patterns can help you plan and structure your daily routine.

- **To monitor medication effectiveness**

If you're using medication or other therapies to manage arthritis pain, recording your pain levels can help you assess the effectiveness of these treatments. You'll be able to see if certain medications reduce your symptoms or if you need to speak with your healthcare provider about adjustments.

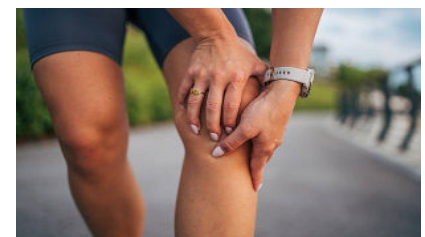
- **To improve communication with healthcare providers**

Detailed records of your symptoms can provide invaluable information to your doctor. When you have a clear record of how your symptoms fluctuate, you can have more productive conversations about treatment options, potential changes and overall management strategies.

Benefits of tracking your progress

- **Motivation and positive reinforcement**

Living with arthritis can feel challenging, but keeping track of improvements - no matter how small - can be incredibly motivating. Each milestone, whether it's reduced pain, greater flexibility, or the ability to do daily tasks more easily, reinforces that your efforts are making a difference.



- **Setting realistic goals**

Tracking progress allows you to set achievable realistic goals for yourself. Instead of expecting major improvements overnight, you can set smaller, specific goals, such as increasing the range of motion in your wrists, improving grip strength, or managing morning stiffness more effectively.

- **Celebrating achievements**

Arthritis management is often a long-term commitment. Tracking progress provides opportunities to celebrate small but meaningful achievements. Recognising these milestones helps you stay positive, focused, and committed to your self-care routines.

- **Identifying effective therapies and exercises**

When you try different therapies, exercises, or lifestyle changes, keeping a record of your progress allows you to assess what is working for you. Whether it's a particular exercise that improves joint flexibility or a dietary adjustment that reduces inflammation, progress tracking helps you personalise your arthritis management plan.

Tips for tracking your arthritis pain and progress

If you're new to tracking your symptoms and progress, the following tips can help you get started and make the process simple and effective.

- **Use a pain journal**

One of the most common methods of tracking arthritis symptoms is a pain journal. In your journal, you can record details like the intensity and location of your pain, stiffness, swelling, and any other symptoms you're experiencing. Use a scale like 1-10 or simple descriptions like fairly mild through to agonising to rate pain intensity and note any factors that may have influenced your symptoms, such as weather, stress, or specific activities.

- **Track daily activities**

Record your daily activities, including exercise, diet, and any notable physical tasks (such as cleaning or gardening). Noting these activities alongside your pain levels can help you understand which activities might be causing flare-ups or pain relief.

- **Record your medications and therapies**

Make notes of any medications, supplements, or therapies you're using, including the dosage, frequency, and timing. You may be able to see trends in how effective these treatments are over time.

- **Monitor physical progress**

In addition to pain, track other physical changes, such as improved range of motion, strength, or flexibility. You could measure your joint flexibility, grip strength, or the distance you can walk comfortably. These physical indicators of progress are important to recognise.

- **Include emotional health**

Arthritis can have an impact on mental and emotional wellbeing. Tracking your mood, stress levels, and sleep patterns can help you understand how arthritis is affecting your overall quality of life. You may notice that mood and pain are related - some people find that increased stress and anxiety leads to more intense pain.

- **Review your records regularly**

Make it a habit to review your records regularly to look for patterns. Set aside time each week or month to go over your notes, celebrate any progress, and identify any adjustments you may want to discuss with your doctor or specialist.

How tracking can lead to better arthritis management

Over time, tracking pain and progress provides helpful insights into managing arthritis effectively. It encourages you to take a proactive approach to your health and understand what works best for your body. Tracking also improves communication with your healthcare team, make sure they tailor treatment plans according to your specific needs.

Living with arthritis can be challenging, but keeping track of your pain and progress can be a game-changer. Not only does it help you monitor your condition and recognise patterns, but it also gives you a sense of control over your health. By identifying triggers, celebrating progress, and setting realistic goals, you can make informed choices that support your wellbeing. Remember, arthritis management is a marathon, not a sprint, and tracking your journey can help you stay motivated, positive, and empowered.

Groundbreaking osteoarthritis study

An international team of researchers has conducted an extensive investigation into the genes associated with osteoarthritis (OA). Led by researchers from the Helmholtz Munich Centre, Germany's largest research organisation and 125 top academic institutions world-wide, the team analysed data from nearly two million people and found 962 genetic variants associated with the condition. The team also drilled down on 69 key genes whose protein products are already targeted by approved drugs. The hope is that many of these medications could be redirected to the treatment of OA.

“This study takes a leap forward in offering tailored therapies for osteoarthritis patients, many of whom have long awaited disease-modifying options,” said Professor Dino Samartzis, co-author of the study. By leveraging human genetics, we can now reimagine much more effectively as to how we treat this widespread condition.” Osteoarthritis is one of the most rapidly increasing health conditions globally. By 2050, one billion people worldwide will be living with OA. Currently, no effective disease-modifying treatments exist for this condition.

This study provides insights into the genetic landscape of the disease and offers a path toward repurposing safe, approved drugs, potentially slashing the time and cost to bring effective treatments to market.

Source: “Nature, Vol 641, 29 May 2025”

AONT website upgrade

Late last year we received funding specifically to rebuild our website through the NT Government Community Benefit Fund Minor Grants program. A modern user friendly website is an important way for us to extend our reach into the broader community.

We are currently working on the construction process with local Darwin company Brainium Labs providing them with the all important content. We look forward to the launch of our new-look website later this year.



Community engagement

AONT had a particularly strong focus on community outreach throughout 2025.

We presented 12 self-management info sessions, three of them in Alice Springs; seven interactive info stands at a range of forums around Darwin and Palmerston and four presentations to community groups, including one in the rural area.

The next info sessions to be held are:

Friday 20th February and 15th May

“Understanding and managing arthritis and osteoporosis”

Friday 20th March:

“What A Pain!” self-management of chronic pain

Friday 17th April:

“Taking the first step, help to get yourself moving”

Feedback from these sessions is always very positive. Participants are sometimes pleasantly surprised at how much they gain from them and how much they have enjoyed the forums.

We welcome bookings and expressions of interest at all times. Ring us on 8948 5232.



Regular exercise changes the brain to improve memory and thinking skills

There are plenty of reasons to be physically active. Big ones include reducing the odds of developing heart disease, stroke and diabetes. Another one is that exercise changes the brain in ways that protect memory and thinking skills.

Exercise and the brain

Exercise helps memory and thinking through both direct and indirect means. It stimulates growth factors – chemicals that affect the health of brain cells, the growth of new blood vessels in the brain and even the abundance and survival of brain cells.

Indirectly, exercise improves mood and sleep, and reduces stress and anxiety - , problems which cause or contribute to cognitive impairment.

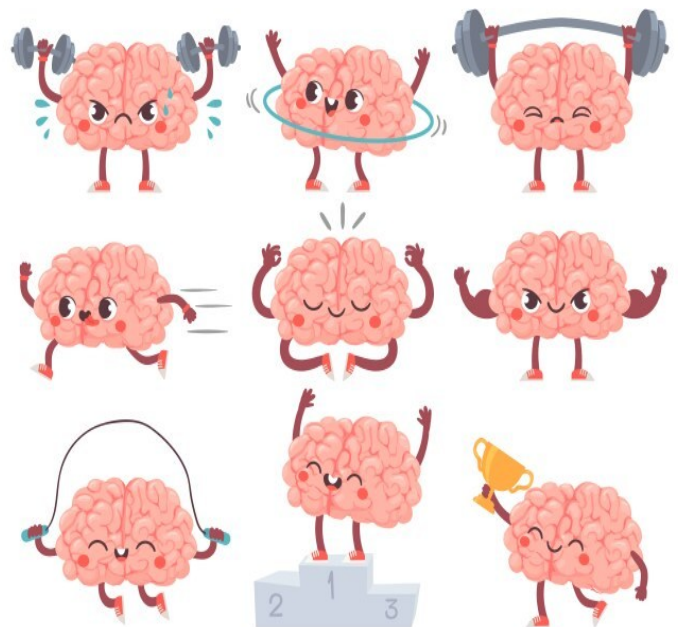
Put it to the test

So what to do? Start exercising!

Aerobic exercise has been found to be best for the brain – walking, swimming, stair climbing, tennis, squash or dancing. Household activities that get your heart pumping can count as well.

How much should you do? Current recommendations are 150 minutes a week but you can start with a few minutes a day gradually increasing until you reach your goal.

From <https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/regular-exercise-changes-brain-improve-memory-thinking-skills-201404097110>



Physical activity and exercise

Structured exercise is any physical activity that is planned, repetitive and purposeful, with the object of maintaining or improving one or more aspects of fitness, such as strength, balance, flexibility or cardio-vascular fitness. Incidental exercise includes things like housework, gardening, hanging up the washing, and walking around the supermarket. All those little sessions add up to make a difference.



For those of us with arthritis it is important to remember that strong muscles are needed to support and protect arthritic joints. Mobility and flexibility of joints helps get us through the day, while good posture and balance help prevent falls. The only way to maintain strength is to use our muscles - hence the old saying "Use it or lose it!"

Cheesy salmon frittatas

<https://www.heartfoundation.org.au/recipes/cheesy-salmon-frittatas>

Ingredients

- Olive oil spray
- 8 eggs, lightly whisked
- 100g reduced-fat ricotta cheese
- ¼ cup (40g) wholemeal plain flour
- 1 small zucchini, coarsely grated
- 95g can salmon in springwater, drained, flaked
- ¾ cup (115g) frozen peas, thawed
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped flat-leaf parsley
- Baby rocket leaves, to serve



Method

1. Preheat oven to 160°C. Lightly spray 6 holes of a ⅔-cup (160ml) muffin pan with olive oil spray and line the bases with baking paper.
2. Whisk the egg and ricotta in a medium bowl. Stir in the flour, zucchini, salmon, peas and parsley.
3. Stir through flour, grated zucchini, salmon, peas and parsley.
4. Spoon the salmon mixture evenly among the prepared holes. Bake for 25-30 minutes or until set and golden.

Tip: Frittatas will keep in an airtight container in the fridge for up to 4 days.

Healthy eating and arthritis

The recommendation from Arthritis Australia is: “The best diet for arthritis a healthy, balanced one to maintain your general health and prevent other medical problems. A healthy balanced diet such as the **Mediterranean diet** rich in oily fish, vegetables and olive oil can help reduce inflammation”. More information about diet to reduce inflammation can be sought from a dietician.

Every house guest brings you happiness. Some when they arrive and some when they are leaving.
Confucius



I Finally Did It!
I bought a new pair of shoes with memory foam insoles. No more forgetting why I walked into the kitchen.

Our work includes:

- Responding to walk in and telephone enquiries
- Providing personalised information packs in response to enquiries
- Hosting regular education sessions: “Understanding and managing arthritis and osteoporosis”, “What a Pain!” and “Taking the first step”. Call the office on 8948 5232 for more details
- Providing information stands at a range of forums throughout the year
- Presentations to community groups
- Keeping in touch with other community health organisations and the services they provide
- Delivering bulk materials on request to a range of health services
- Producing this newsletter six times a year
- Liaising with Arthritis Australia, interstate arthritis affiliates and Healthy Bones Australia
- Making applications for various small grants to assist with special projects



Thank you to our members

.... for your support in renewing your membership. Membership income really does contribute to our financial stability each year and we appreciate your commitment.

We would love to have your feedback on what we do and how we can help you more. Ring the office on 8948 5232 or email info@aont.org.au to let us know your thoughts.

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

Patron

Ms Ruth Jones

We are open

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

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Arthritis & Osteoporosis NT is Proudly sponsored by

