



The Arthritis
Society

Just Diagnosed TOOLKIT



A guide to better understanding and managing arthritis



ARTHRITIS  **FIGHT IT!**

INTRODUCTION TO THE JUST DIAGNOSED TOOLKIT

If you've recently been diagnosed with arthritis, you may be wondering – "now what?" "Will my pain get worse? Can I keep my arthritis in check? How will I manage my everyday activities?"

This resource kit has been designed to provide you with helpful information on how to effectively manage your arthritis. From information about the various health-care providers who can help you, to tips on what you can do yourself to effectively manage your arthritis, this kit will answer many questions you will initially have and will help set you on the right path.

What is Arthritis?

The word arthritis means inflammation of the joints. It can result in joint pain, stiffness and swelling. There are more than 100 types of arthritis. Some types of arthritis are caused by joint inflammation, while others are caused by joint degeneration. It is important to know what type of arthritis you have so that you can learn more and have a treatment plan developed specifically for you.

If you have arthritis, it is important that you manage your condition by:

- Knowing the type of arthritis you have;
- Actively participating in making decisions about your care;
- Getting the support and resources you need;
- Introducing regular, appropriate exercise;
- Maintaining a healthy weight;
- Knowing about your medications and following the directions carefully;
- Seeing the right health-care providers;
- Telling your health-care providers about all of the prescription and non-prescription medications you take;
- Co-operating fully with the course of treatment that you plan and agree to as a member of your health-care team.

Your Arthritis Health-Care Team

Many people can help you manage your arthritis. Your team may include a variety of health-care providers, depending on your needs and the community you live in. For example, your team may include a family doctor, nurse practitioner, nurse, rheumatologist, occupational therapist, physiotherapist, social worker, pharmacist, dietitian and orthopedic surgeon. It is important that you are also an active member of your health-care team.



CHECKLIST #1

What will my health-care team need to know about my health history?

It is important to maintain an up-to-date record of your health history and to share it on an ongoing basis with the various members of your health-care team. To help you keep track of your health history and new developments, The Arthritis Society offers the *Arthritis Pain Management Diary*. It can be downloaded by visiting www.arthritis.ca/paindiary.

Your health history should include a list of:

- Medical conditions and surgeries from childhood to the present;
- All medications, both prescription and non-prescription, including vitamins and supplements, you are now taking or have taken in the past, and their dosages. For medications you have stopped taking, record the reason 'why';
- Any treatments that you have used for your pain and whether or not they were helpful.

CHECKLIST #2

What will my health-care team require of me?

There are specific steps you can take to ensure you are making the most effective use of your time with your health-care providers, and that you acquire the information you need. The following steps can help you achieve this goal.

- Make notes, with dates, of any changes in your condition, as well as any side effects from medications, and bring them with you to your appointment;
- List any treatments you have had since your last appointment;
- Bring a family member or friend with you if you need help to remember the information to be discussed during your appointment;
- Ensure that you have blood work and other tests done so your progress can be checked;
- Tell your health-care provider, in advance, if you may need a longer appointment than usual to discuss questions about your arthritis or treatment;
- Bring any questions to your next appointment so that your health-care provider can answer them and discuss your concerns.