



10 signs you care of your

Your hard-working joints provide you with both movement and stability. Here are 10 indications that yours might benefit from some additional tender loving care – plus our top tips for giving them exactly that.

It's easy to take your joint health for granted in your younger years, but as we get older, most of us become increasingly aware of how precious our mobility is. Osteoarthritis is the most prevalent age-related joint problem, affecting around one in five women and one in 10 men over 60 years old. It typically develops over an extended period of time – some experts estimate at least 10 to 20 years.

Luckily there are a number of strategies you can adopt now to help maintain your existing joint health and/or manage your osteoarthritis symptoms, which may be particularly beneficial if you're affected by any of the following 10 issues:

1 You're experiencing joint pain
The knees are the joints most commonly affected by osteoarthritis, and you may feel them complaining when you're carrying a heavy load or walking up or down stairs. You might also find that your joints ache for a while after you've used them.

2 Your joints are tender to touch
Do one or more of your joints feel sore and tender when you press down on them? This may be an indication that swelling

and inflammation are present, even if they're not visible to the naked eye.

3 It takes you a while to get moving
Osteoarthritic joints tend to tighten during periods of rest, and regain their mobility after a little movement. This typically manifests with stiffness upon getting out of bed in the morning or standing up after sitting for a long time, and may ease off as your joints 'warm up'.

4 Your joints click, crack or grate when you move them
Clicking, creaking and cracking sensations in the joints are called crepitus, and when they occur frequently, may indicate that joint damage is present.

5 Your joints aren't very flexible
A reduced range of motion is a common feature of arthritic joints, and over time, may impede your ability to perform certain tasks or retain your balance.

6 You're overweight
Being overweight strongly increases your risk of developing osteoarthritis, not only due to the increased load on your knees and other weight-bearing joints, but also because excess weight is generally associated with increased inflammation.

7 Your work has had an impact on your joints
People who've worked in jobs that subject their joints to repetitive heavy loads have an increased risk of osteoarthritis. This issue is particularly relevant for tradies (especially carpet layers), labourers,

farmers and removalists, along with others whose work has involved similar activities.

8 You've participated in high impact exercise
Soccer, rugby, running and netball are all renowned for the heavy load they place on the joints. With all that landing on your feet heavily and twisting and pivoting while moving at speed, it's easy to see why! Unfortunately, these high impact sports increase your likelihood of developing joint issues. For example, it's estimated that up to 29 per cent of former soccer players and up to 20 per cent of long-distance runners will experience osteoarthritis.

9 You have a history of joint injury
Have you ever torn your anterior cruciate ligament (ACL)? If so, your knee is significantly more likely to become arthritic as you get older. Other joint traumas may also increase the subsequent likelihood of osteoarthritis.

10 Your parents had joint problems
If your mum or dad had osteoarthritis significant enough for them to need joint replacement surgery, you're more likely than other people to develop osteoarthritis too.

How can I look after my joints?

If one or more of the 10 warning signs above apply to you, here are some simple steps you can take to look after your joints:

- **Lose weight if necessary:** For every kilogram of excess weight you shed, the working load on your knees decreases by the equivalent of four kilos. Losing

You need to take joints and what to do about them

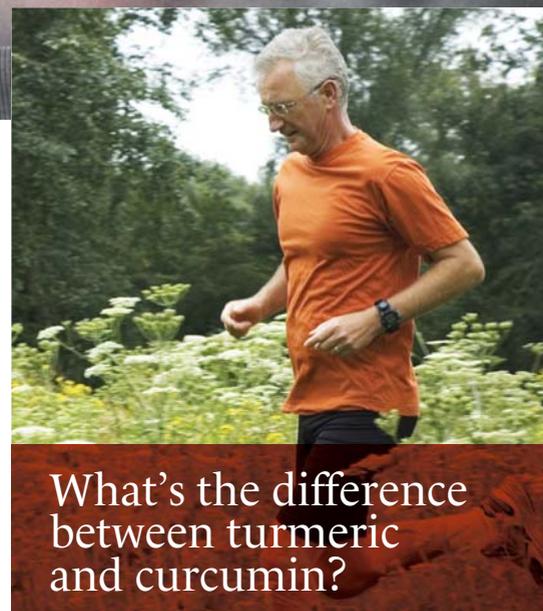
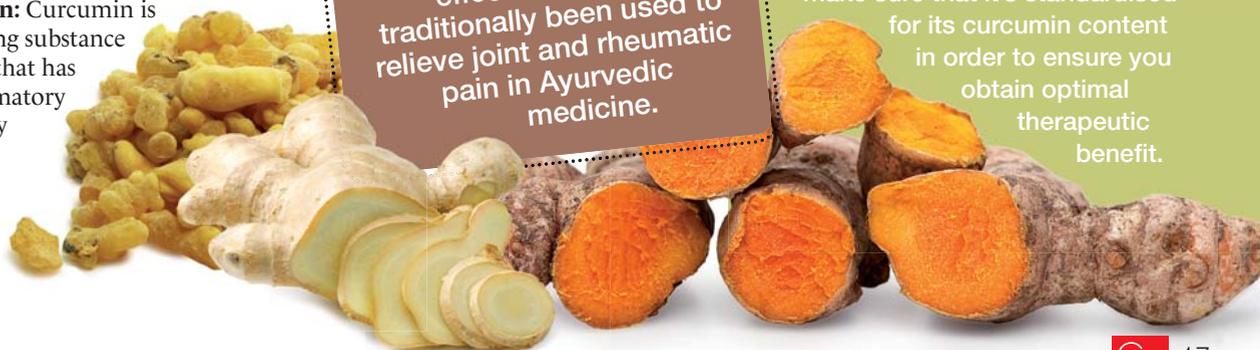
just 5 per cent of your body weight may be enough to start relieving symptoms of joint pain, but losing 10 per cent could have even more significant benefits

- **Be active:** The more active you are now, the happier your joints are likely to be in the future – but choose low impact forms of exercise (like swimming or cycling), and try to incorporate aerobic, strengthening and flexibility-building exercises into your routine
- **Try a yoga class:** Yoga may benefit osteoarthritis by strengthening the muscles, stretching out tight joints, improving balance and realigning the skeleton - just be sure to tell your instructor about your joint health issues so they can tailor the postures to your capability
- **Treat yourself to a regular massage:** The muscles around your joints play an important role in their stability and functioning, and regular massage may help relieve osteoarthritis symptoms. For example, a pilot study involving US war veterans with osteoarthritis of the knee found that after eight weeks of regular massage, osteoarthritis pain was reduced by 37 per cent and their joint function had improved 32 per cent
- **Consider curcumin:** Curcumin is a naturally occurring substance found in turmeric that has potent anti-inflammatory properties, and may help to relieve the pain, stiffness and inflammation of mild osteoarthritis of the knee

- **Eat plenty of fish:** Try to eat at least two serves of oily fish (like salmon, sardines or mackerel) every week for their anti-inflammatory benefits; alternatively, consider taking an omega-3 supplement
- **Care for your cartilage with glucosamine and chondroitin:** Glucosamine and chondroitin are important building blocks of cartilage, and may help slow the cartilage breakdown that's a critical factor in the progression of osteoarthritis. Taking glucosamine and chondroitin may also help relieve joint pain and stiffness, and improve joint mobility. The Chinese herbs Eucommia and Acanthopanax are often taken alongside glucosamine and chondroitin, and have traditionally been used to nourish and support the joints while strengthening the tendons and bones. 

Paul Keogh is the co-founder of Global Therapeutics Pty Ltd, trading as Fusion Health. References available on request. If you're concerned that you may have osteoarthritis, consult your healthcare professional.

Tip: Curcumin teams well with ginger and boswellia, which also have anti-inflammatory effects and have traditionally been used to relieve joint and rheumatic pain in Ayurvedic medicine.



What's the difference between turmeric and curcumin?

Turmeric is a spice that's a common ingredient in curries and has a long history of use in Ayurvedic traditional medicine. Curcumin is a compound from turmeric that has potent anti-inflammatory properties. Supplements are available that contain either turmeric as a stand-alone ingredient or a combination of turmeric and other herbs. Whichever option you choose, make sure that it's standardised for its curcumin content in order to ensure you obtain optimal therapeutic benefit.