

WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP MYSELF?

Regular exercise is important as part of a healthy lifestyle, and there's no reason why people with hypermobile joints shouldn't exercise. However, if you find that certain sports or exercises involve movements that cause pain, you should stop these activities until it's clear why there is pain. With the right strengthening exercises it may be possible to return to these activities without increasing pain.

A podiatrist /physiotherapist can advise you about exercises to improve control of your movements required when doing exercise. If further control of the joints is required a podiatrist can prescribe orthotics to aid with this. If pain persists you may be prescribed pain relief. If the joint often swells up, especially after dislocation, a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID) may be recommended. You can get some painkillers or NSAIDs as a spray or a cream, which allows them to be applied directly onto the troublesome joint. This method tends to be less effective, but does reduce the side-effects. Your doctor or Pharmacist will advise.

There is no specific diet to help joint hypermobility, but you should aim to eat a healthy, balanced diet and to keep your weight under control as increased weight, increases the load of your joints.

Information taken from Arthritis Research UK and further information available at www.versusarthritis.org

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Issued	Jan 2002
Revised	May 2019
Next Review	Sept 2021
Images	NHS Podiatry



PODIATRY DEPARTMENT



HYPERMOBILITY

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If you have joint hypermobility, some or all of your joints will have an unusually large range of movement. You may have known that your joints were very 'supple' even from an early age. You may have been 'double-jointed', or able to twist your limbs into unusual positions.

Hypermobility is not a medical condition in itself, and many people do not realise they are hypermobile if it does not cause them any problems. Hypermobility might even be an advantage in sports, playing musical instruments, and dance.

However, some people with hypermobile joints may have symptoms such as joint or muscle pain and may find that they are more prone to injury or even dislocation. If you do have symptoms then you may have joint hypermobility syndrome.

WHAT CAUSES JOINT HYPERMOBILITY?

- Inheriting the condition from a parent – about 75% of people affected by joint hypermobility have a previous family history of it.
- The shape of the ends of the bones (where they move at the joints).
- Weak or stretched ligaments (these are what hold your joints in place)



WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

If you have hypermobile joints, then you may have the following symptoms.

Muscle strain or pain (especially after physical work or exercise): Your muscles have to work harder if your joint is very mobile and this can lead to muscle strain and a general feeling of fatigue (tiredness). In effect, an 'overuse' injury develops in the muscles around your joint (though the pain may seem to come from the joint itself).

Joint stiffness: Sometimes your joint may feel tense or stiff, which may be caused by fluid collecting inside the joint. This is probably because your body is trying to repair the small amounts of damage that are caused if a muscle or joint is over stretched. Your pain will often feel worse as the day goes on and improve at night with rest.

Foot and ankle pain: You may easily twist and strain at the ankles, and have a flat arch to your foot that can lead to pain, particularly after standing for a long time.

Neck pain and backache: This can be a problem if your spine is particularly supple, and the muscles around your spine aren't working to support it correctly. Very occasionally the bones in your back (vertebrae) can slip on another – this is called a spondylolisthesis.

Injured or dislocated joints:

Hypermobile joints are more likely than normal joints to get injured if they're overstretched. Sometimes the joint may dislocate – this is most common in the shoulder or the kneecap. Sometimes the soft tissues in and around joints (cartilage, tendons, ligaments) can tear.