

Overview - Arthritis

Arthritis is a disorder which impacts the joints, often resulting in swelling and inflammation. It can affect any age group and is not just part of the ageing process. When an arthritic flare-up is active, in addition to severe pain the person can feel as though they have flu.

Students with arthritis may experience the following issues:

- Pain – this can be both acute (sudden) and chronic (long-lasting). It can also be neuropathic (shooting nerve pain).
- Impaired concentration due to prescribed pain medications.
- Immobility and stiffness, particularly after periods of inactivity.
- Loss of strength, e.g. grip, making it difficult to carry and set up equipment.
- Fatigue and difficulty sleeping.
- Reactive depression and anxiety due to managing a long-term painful condition.
- A sense of isolation.
- Periods of absence due to medical appointments and possibly surgery.



Top tips for teaching students with arthritis:

- As this is a variable disability, be flexible about attendance to allow for flare-ups and medical appointments.
- Consider granting extensions to deadlines if the student is experiencing a flare-up.
- Have a designated person within the department that the student should notify in the event of disability-related absence.
- Avoid last-minute changes to lecture venues and times, and allow the student plenty of time to move between classes.
- Provide accessible seating, if required.
- Allow the student to stand, move around or leave the lecture for medical reasons.
- Liaise with the student and Accessibility well in advance of field trips and placements to ensure they have access to separate sleeping arrangements and a support worker if required. Specialist transport and equipment may also be needed.
- Consider allowing extra time in exams.
- Provide lecture notes and slides (ideally in advance) so the student does not miss out on key information.

Useful links

- <http://www.healthtalk.org/young-peoples-experiences/arthritis/topics>
- <http://www.arthritisresearchuk.org/arthritis-information/young-people/living-with-arthritis/education/university.aspx>

