**WHAT PHYSIOTHERAPY CAN DO FOR YOU**

If you’re experiencing aches and pains in a joint or a muscle, nowadays your GP practice is likely to offer you an appointment with a physiotherapist working in the practice. There are two good reasons for seeing a physiotherapist first instead of a doctor.

* The advantages for you are that you won’t have to wait long for the appointment, and you will see a clinician with expertise to diagnose and treat your problem.
* The doctors will have more time to treat conditions that need their particular skills, including some serious or urgent ones which would otherwise have to wait to be seen. Without the services of a physiotherapist, musculoskeletal problems take up about a third of GP appointments.

Joint and muscle pains are common, and treatment will depend on what is causing them. Some need rest, followed by exercises to build up muscle strength and prevent the problem reoccurring. Others, for instance if they are due to osteoarthritis, will be helped by keeping the joint mobile, and the physiotherapist will advise you about which exercises to do. They may also recommend painkillers to make the exercises possible. If your joint problem could benefit from a steroid injection you will be referred to you doctor to discuss it.

Everyone experiences bone density loss (osteoporosis) with ageing, and having thinner bones can lead to fractures. Bones can be strengthened by weight-bearing exercise, a calcium-rich diet and sometimes medication, as well as reducing alcohol and stopping smoking.

If you enjoy sport or vigorous exercise of any kind, a physiotherapist can help you to avoid injury with appropriate exercises:

* to protect your muscles by warming up first and cooling down afterwards
* and to increase your body strength and flexibility.