Arthritis

Abi Harrison-Nye

Symptoms

- Persistent joint pain, tenderness, and stiffness.
- Swelling or redness around the affected joints.
- Reduced range of movement and muscle weakness.

Age & Gender

- Most common in people over 40, though it can start at any age.
- Females are more likely to develop both osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis.

Misconceptions

- It's not just 'wear and tear' from getting older.
- It's not just a few aches. It can cause severe, debilitating pain.
- It doesn't only affect the elderly.

Diagnosis

- GPs use blood tests to check for inflammation or specific antibodies.
- X-rays, MRI, or ultrasound scans identify joint damage and inflammation.

Treatment

- Painkillers and anti-inflammatory drugs help manage daily symptoms.
- Physiotherapy improves joint flexibility and strengthens the surrounding muscles.

Support

- Provide ergonomic equipment like vertical mice or padded keyboards.
- Allow for flexible breaks if they need to move or rest stiff joints.
- Be mindful that their mobility and pain levels can change daily.

This information isn't a diagnostic tool. If you recognise these symptoms in yourself or others, please contact a doctor.

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Asthma

Abi Harrison-Nye

Symptoms

- Breathlessness and a tight feeling in the chest.
- Wheezing or a whistling sound when breathing.
- Persistent coughing, especially at night or early in the morning.

Age & Gender

- It can start at any time. Adult-onset asthma is very common.
- It's more common in males during childhood, but more common in females as adults.

Misconceptions

- It's not just a childhood condition. It can develop at any age.
- It's not 'just a bit of panting'. Attacks can be life-threatening.
- It’s not always triggered by exercise. Stress or cold air can also cause it.

Diagnosis

- Spirometry tests measure how much air you can breathe out in one second.
- Peak flow tests track how fast you can blow air out of your lungs.

Treatment

- Reliever inhalers provide quick relief during an attack or flare-up.
- Preventer inhalers are used daily to reduce inflammation in the airways.

Support

- Ensure the workplace is free from strong scents, dust, or smoke.
- Allow them to keep their inhaler with them at all times.
- Know the office first aid procedure for a severe asthma attack.

This information isn't a diagnostic tool. If you recognise these symptoms in yourself or others, please contact a doctor.

Cancer

Abi Harrison-Nye

Symptoms

- Persistent, unexplained exhaustion that doesn't improve with rest.
- Lumps, changes in skin, or unexplained weight loss.
- Cognitive issues often called 'chemo brain', affecting memory and focus.

Age & Gender

- It can affect any age, though risk generally increases as a person gets older.
- Certain types, like breast or prostate cancer, are gender-specific.

Misconceptions

- It's not always a death sentence. Many cancers are now treatable or manageable.
- It's not over once treatment ends, as side effects can last years.
- It's not always visible, for instance, someone can have cancer without losing hair.

Diagnosis

- Screening and biopsies are used to identify cancerous cells.
- Scans track the location and size of tumours.

Treatment

- Surgery, chemotherapy, and radiotherapy are common primary treatments.
- Targeted therapies and immunotherapy are increasingly used for specific types.

Support

- Offer phased returns to work to help manage post-treatment fatigue.
- Be flexible with time off for frequent medical appointments or scans.
- Provide a quiet space for rest if they experience sudden energy drops.

This information isn't a diagnostic tool. If you recognise these symptoms in yourself or others, please contact a doctor.

Cerebral Palsy

Abi Harrison-Nye

Symptoms

- Muscles that feel very stiff and tight or, conversely, very floppy.
- Tremors or jerky, clumsy movements that are difficult to control.
- Challenges with balance, coordination, and fine motor skills.

Age & Gender

- It’s a lifelong condition caused by brain damage before, during, or shortly after birth.
- It's slightly more common in males.

Misconceptions

- It’s not a progressive disease, and it doesn't get worse over time.
- It’s not a sign of low intelligence. Many people have average or high IQs.
- It doesn't always require a wheelchair.

Diagnosis

- Doctors observe a child's developmental milestones and motor skills.
- MRI or CT scans identify the specific area of brain injury.

Treatment

- Physiotherapy helps to improve strength, gait, and flexibility.
- Speech therapy assists with communication and any swallowing difficulties.

Support

- Ensure the environment is physically accessible.
- Allow extra time for tasks that require fine motor skills or typing.
- Focus on their skills and contributions rather than their physical movements.

This information isn't a diagnostic tool. If you recognise these symptoms in yourself or others, please contact a doctor.

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Colour Blindness

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Symptoms

- Difficulty telling the difference between specific colours.
- Seeing certain colours as washed out, or as shades of grey and brown.
- Finding it hard to read colour-coded charts, maps, or certain traffic signals.

Age & Gender

- It’s much more common in males, affecting about 1 in 12, compared to 1 in 200 females.
- The condition is usually present from birth and stays the same throughout life.

Misconceptions

- It’s not seeing the world like a black and white film.
- It’s not just 'mixing up' colours, it's a physical inability to perceive them.
- It’s not something that can be cured with simple 'colour-correcting' glasses.

Diagnosis

- Opticians use Ishihara plates, which are circles made of coloured dots with hidden numbers.
- Computerised arrangement tests check how well a person can order colours by shade.

Treatment

- There's no cure for inherited colour blindness.
- Special lenses or filters can help distinguish between certain shades.
- Labelling clothes or using apps that identify colours helps with daily tasks.

Support

- Use patterns or symbols instead of just colours to show information.
- Avoid using red and green together on charts and maps.
- Use high-contrast text and clear labels for documents.

This information isn't a diagnostic tool. If you recognise these symptoms in yourself or others, please contact a doctor.

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Crohn's Disease

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Symptoms

- Extreme stomach pain and frequent, urgent diarrhoea.
- Severe fatigue and unintended weight loss.
- General feeling of being unwell or having a fever.

Age & Gender

- Most often diagnosed in teenagers and young adults aged 16 to 30.
- It affects all genders equally.

Misconceptions

- It's not just a bad stomach ache, but a serious lifelong inflammatory condition.
- It's not caused by a poor diet, though food can trigger flares.
- It's not always visible, as people can look well while in pain.

Diagnosis

- Blood and stool samples check for signs of inflammation.
- Colonoscopies allow doctors to look at the lining of the gut.

Treatment

- Steroids and immunosuppressants help to reduce internal inflammation.
- Surgery may be needed to remove damaged parts of the digestive system.

Support

- Ensure they have easy, quick access to a toilet without explanation.
- Be flexible with schedules, as flare-ups can be sudden and exhausting.
- Provide a private space for them to manage their symptoms.

This information isn't a diagnostic tool. If you recognise these symptoms in yourself or others, please contact a doctor.

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Dementia

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Symptoms

- Persistent memory loss, especially forgetting recent events or names.
- Difficulty planning, following recipes, or keeping track of bills.
- Confusion about time and place, or getting lost in familiar areas.

Age & Gender

- Most common in people over 65, though 'young-onset' affects many.
- Females are more likely to develop it and often live longer with it.

Misconceptions

- It’s not a natural part of ageing, it’s a brain disease.
- It’s not just 'forgetfulness', it affects mood and personality too.
- It’s not the same for everyone, there are over 100 different types.

Diagnosis

- GPs perform memory tests and check for other physical causes.
- Brain scans like CT or MRI identify physical changes in the brain.
- Specialists assess language, problem-solving, and attention skills.

Treatment

- Medication can temporarily slow down the worsening of symptoms.
- Cognitive stimulation therapy keeps the mind active and engaged.
- Occupational therapy helps adapt the home for safety and ease.

Support

- Speak clearly in short sentences and avoid asking too many questions.
- Maintain a consistent routine to help them feel secure.
- Focus on their feelings rather than correcting their facts.

This information isn't a diagnostic tool. If you recognise these symptoms in yourself or others, please contact a doctor.

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Diabetes

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Symptoms

- Feeling very thirsty and passing urine more often than usual.
- Extreme tiredness and blurred vision.
- Cuts or wounds that take a long time to heal.

Age & Gender

- Type 1 often appears in childhood, while Type 2 is more common in adults.
- It affects all genders, though males are at a slightly higher risk for Type 2.

Misconceptions

- It’s not caused by just eating too much sugar.
- It’s not 'the bad kind' or 'the easy kind'. Both types are serious.
- People can still eat sweets or fruit. They just need to manage their levels.

Diagnosis

- Blood tests measure the amount of glucose attached to red blood cells.
- A fasting glucose test checks sugar levels after not eating overnight.

Treatment

- Insulin injections or pumps are required for Type 1.
- Tablets or lifestyle changes often manage Type 2.

Support

- Provide a private, clean space if they need to inject insulin.
- Allow breaks for them to check blood sugar or eat a snack.
- Learn the signs of a 'hypo', such as shakiness or confusion.

This information isn't a diagnostic tool. If you recognise these symptoms in yourself or others, please contact a doctor.

Endometriosis

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Symptoms

- Chronic pelvic pain that is often severe and debilitating.
- Very heavy periods that interfere with daily activities.
- Persistent fatigue.

Age & Gender

- It can affect any female or person assigned female at birth from puberty to menopause.
- Most people wait an average of eight years for a correct diagnosis.

Misconceptions

- It’s not just 'bad period cramps', but a systemic inflammatory condition.
- It’s not cured by pregnancy or having a hysterectomy.
- It’s not always easy to see on standard ultrasound scans.

Diagnosis

- Laparoscopy (keyhole surgery) is the only way to diagnose it for certain.
- MRI scans can sometimes identify deep endometriosis or cysts.

Treatment

- Hormone treatments or the pill can help to manage pain and bleeding.
- Keyhole surgery is used to remove or destroy endometrial tissue.

Support

- Provide easy access to toilets and comfortable, private rest areas.
- Allow for flexible working or home working during painful flare-ups.
- Offer heat pads or ergonomic seating to help manage pelvic pain.

This information isn't a diagnostic tool. If you recognise these symptoms in yourself or others, please contact a doctor.

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Epilepsy

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Symptoms

- Seizures involving shaking or jerking.
- Staring blankly or losing awareness briefly.
- Strange sensations like unusual smells or tastes.

Age & Gender

- It can start at any age, but it's most commonly diagnosed in children and people over 65.
- It affects all genders equally.

Misconceptions

- It’s not always a visible fit, as some seizures look like brief daydreaming.
- It’s rarely triggered by flashing lights, which only affects about 3% of people with epilepsy.
- Don't put objects in their mouth, as it isn’t possible to swallow your tongue.

Diagnosis

- Electroencephalogram (EEG) tests record the electrical activity of the brain to find unusual patterns.
- MRI or CT scans check for any physical causes of seizures in the brain.

Treatment

- Anti-epileptic drugs (AEDs) are the most common way to prevent seizures.
- Emergency medication can be used to stop a seizure that lasts too long.

Support

- Learn the specific first aid for different types of seizures.
- Stay with the person until they have fully recovered and are alert.
- Avoid making assumptions about their ability to drive or use screens.

This information isn't a diagnostic tool. If you recognise these symptoms in yourself or others, please contact a doctor.

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Fibromyalgia

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Symptoms

- Widespread pain and tenderness lasting three months or more.
- Extreme fatigue that is not relieved by sleep or rest.
- Cognitive issues often called 'fibro-fog' affecting memory and focus.

Age & Gender

- Most common in people aged between 30 and 50, but can affect any age.
- Diagnosed much more frequently in females than in males.

Misconceptions

- It's a physical condition, not something that's 'all in the mind'.
- It's not a form of arthritis, as it affects soft tissues rather than joints.
- People with fibromyalgia aren't 'just lazy'. The fatigue and pain are often debilitating.

Diagnosis

- There is no specific scan or blood test for Fibromyalgia.
- Diagnosed by a GP or Rheumatologist by ruling out other conditions.
- Based on widespread pain in specific areas of the body for a long period.

Treatment

- Medication can help manage nerve pain or improve sleep.
- Gentle movement like swimming helps maintain mobility.
- CBT helps manage the mental impact of chronic pain.

Support

- Be flexible with plans as symptoms can 'flare up' without warning.
- Offer practical help with physical tasks like shopping or cleaning.
- Believe them when they say they are in pain, even if they look well.

This information isn't a diagnostic tool. If you recognise these symptoms in yourself or others, please contact a doctor.

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Hearing Impairment

Abi Harrison-Nye

Symptoms

- Difficulty hearing people clearly, especially in noisy or crowded places.
- Asking others to repeat themselves or mishearing what's been said.
- Needing a higher volume on the television, radio, or phone.

Age & Gender

- Prevalence increases with age, particularly for those over 50.
- It affects males and females at similar rates, though males often have more noise-induced loss.

Misconceptions

- It’s not just an 'older person's problem'. It can affect people of all ages.
- Not everyone who is hard of hearing uses or knows sign language.
- It’s not solved by just shouting, which can distort the sound.

Diagnosis

- Audiologists measure the quietest sounds you can hear.
- Physical exams check for earwax, fluid, or eardrum damage.

Treatment

- Hearing aids or cochlear implants clarify sounds.
- Loop systems and speech-to-text apps improve accessibility.

Support

- Face the person directly and keep your mouth visible while speaking.
- Reduce background noise when holding meetings or conversations.
- Use written follow-ups to ensure all verbal information was understood.

This information isn't a diagnostic tool. If you recognise these symptoms in yourself or others, please contact a doctor.

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Lupus

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Symptoms

- Extreme fatigue that doesn't improve with rest or sleep.
- Pain and swelling in the joints, often accompanied by stiffness.
- A characteristic 'butterfly' rash across the cheeks and bridge of the nose.

Age & Gender

- Most commonly diagnosed in females between the ages of 15 and 45.
- Females are nine times more likely to develop the condition than males.

Misconceptions

- It’s not a contagious disease.
- It’s not just a skin condition, as it can affect internal organs.
- It’s not predictable, with symptoms fluctuating between wellness and severe flares.

Diagnosis

- Blood tests check for specific antibodies suggesting an autoimmune response.
- Urine tests and biopsies monitor whether the condition is affecting the kidneys.

Treatment

- Anti-inflammatory drugs and antimalarials help manage pain and skin issues.
- Immunosuppressants are used in more severe cases to stop self-attack.

Support

- Limit exposure to bright lights which can trigger flares.
- Offer flexible deadlines to accommodate sudden, severe fatigue.
- Position workstations away from direct heat or intense light.

This information isn't a diagnostic tool. If you recognise these symptoms in yourself or others, please contact a doctor.

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Migraine

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Symptoms

- Severe, throbbing headaches often with nausea or vomiting.
- Extreme sensitivity to light, sound, or smells.
- Visual disturbances like flashing lights or blind spots.

Age & Gender

- Most common in people aged 35 to 45, though it affects all age groups.
- Females are three times more likely to experience migraines than males.

Misconceptions

- It’s not just a 'bad headache', but a neurological condition.
- It’s not caused by stress alone, though stress can be a trigger.
- It’s not possible to just 'push through' an attack.

Diagnosis

- GPs diagnose it by identifying a pattern of recurring, severe headaches.
- Diaries are used to track triggers, symptoms, and the frequency of attacks.

Treatment

- Triptans and specific painkillers are taken at the start of an attack.
- Preventative medications or Botox injections help reduce the frequency of chronic cases.

Support

- Provide 'quiet rooms' with dimmable lights for use during an attack.
- Use anti-glare screen filters and avoid strong office fragrances.
- Allow for flexible deadlines during a flare-up to reduce pressure.

This information isn't a diagnostic tool. If you recognise these symptoms in yourself or others, please contact a doctor.

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Multiple Sclerosis (MS)

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Symptoms

- Fatigue, balance issues, and difficulty walking or moving.
- Numbness, tingling, or 'pins and needles' in the limbs.
- Blurred vision or pain when moving the eyes.

Age & Gender

- Most commonly diagnosed in people aged 20 to 40.
- Females are roughly three times more likely to have MS than males.

Misconceptions

- Most people with MS have a normal life expectancy.
- It’s not contagious and cannot be passed to others.
- It doesn’t always require a wheelchair.

Diagnosis

- Neurologists use MRI scans to look for scarring in the brain or spine.
- Lumbar punctures may be used to check spinal fluid for specific proteins.
- Nerve tests measure how quickly signals travel to the brain.

Treatment

- Disease-modifying therapies (DMTs) help reduce the number of relapses.
- Steroids are used to speed up recovery from sudden attacks.
- Physiotherapy maintains strength and manages muscle stiffness.

Support

- Avoid suggesting 'miracle diets' or simple lifestyle cures.
- Provide a cool environment, as heat often makes symptoms worse.
- Be patient with 'brain fog' or sudden changes in energy levels.

This information isn't a diagnostic tool. If you recognise these symptoms in yourself or others, please contact a doctor.

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Parkinson’s

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Symptoms

- Involuntary shaking of parts of the body (tremors).
- Slow movement making daily tasks take much longer.
- Stiff and inflexible muscles, often causing cramps.

Age & Gender

- Most people develop symptoms after the age of 50.
- Males are about 1.5 times more likely to have the condition than females.

Misconceptions

- It’s not just 'the shakes', it affects speech and mood too.
- It’s not a normal part of ageing.
- It’s not always obvious, and some people have no tremors at all.

Diagnosis

- No single test exists, so a specialist makes a clinical judgement.
- Physical exams check for balance, stiffness, and walking speed.
- Doctors monitor how well the person responds to Parkinson's medication.

Treatment

- Medication increases dopamine levels to improve movement.
- Physiotherapy helps with mobility and prevents falls.
- Speech therapy assists with communication or swallowing issues.

Support

- Give them plenty of time to speak or move without rushing them.
- Do not finish their sentences or speak for them.
- Be aware that their facial expressions may seem 'masked' or blank.

This information isn't a diagnostic tool. If you recognise these symptoms in yourself or others, please contact a doctor.

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Thyroid Conditions

Abi Harrison-Nye

Symptoms

- Weight changes, extreme fatigue, and sensitivity to cold or heat.
- Rapid heart rate, tremors, and feelings of anxiety.
- Persistent 'brain fog' and general muscle weakness.

Age & Gender

- Thyroid issues are much more common in females than in males.
- They can develop at any age, though risk increases as you get older.

Misconceptions

- It’s not just a 'weight issue', as it affects heart rate and mood.
- It’s not always solved instantly by a single pill.
- It's not laziness, but a physical lack of energy due to hormone levels.

Diagnosis

- Blood tests measure levels of thyroid-stimulating hormone (TSH) and thyroid hormones like thyroxine (T4).
- Physical exams check for swelling in the neck, known as a goitre.

Treatment

- Daily hormone replacement tablets are used to balance levels.
- Regular blood tests ensure the dosage remains effective over time.

Support

- Offer temperature-controlled spaces for heat or cold sensitivity.
- Allow flexible start times to help with morning fatigue.
- Provide written instructions to assist with 'brain fog'.

This information isn't a diagnostic tool. If you recognise these symptoms in yourself or others, please contact a doctor.

Visual Impairment

Abi Harrison-Nye

Symptoms

- Difficulty seeing clearly even when wearing glasses or contact lenses.
- Blurred vision, blind spots, or a loss of peripheral vision.
- Struggling to read small print or recognise faces in low light.

Age & Gender

- Risk increases with age, particularly for those over the age of 65.
- Females are slightly more likely to be affected than males.

Misconceptions

- It’s not a total lack of sight for everyone. Many have some vision.
- It’s not fixed by wearing stronger glasses or contacts.
- People don't always use a cane or a guide dog.

Diagnosis

- Optometrists use eye charts and cameras to check the retina.
- Visual field tests measure how much a person sees around them.

Treatment

- Surgery or injections can treat some specific causes of sight loss.
- Magnifiers, screen readers, and high-contrast tools help with daily tasks.

Support

- Introduce yourself when entering a room and say when you're leaving.
- Keep walkways clear of obstacles and don't move personal items.
- Offer to guide them by letting them take your arm.

This information isn't a diagnostic tool. If you recognise these symptoms in yourself or others, please contact a doctor.

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