

FOOT HEALTH
Made Simple

A supportive guide for people living with
Inflammatory Arthritis

SKIN SOLES
SKIN AND FOOT HEALTH CLINIC

WHO *this is for*

New and existing patients of all ages living with inflammatory arthritis (IA), including rheumatoid arthritis, psoriatic arthritis, ankylosing spondylitis, juvenile idiopathic arthritis and related conditions.

what you'll GET

Simple daily habits to reduce foot pain, protect your joints, and stay active, without needing special equipment.

Version/Date: **May 2026**

Clinic: **Skin Soles Skin and Foot Health Clinic**

Website: **www.skinsoles.co.uk**



Important note: This booklet is for education and support. It does not replace medical advice. If you have severe pain, sudden heat or swelling, fever, or an open wound, contact your Podiatrist, your GP or by calling UK: NHS 111; **call 999 if severe or an emergency.**

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WHY FOOT CARE MATTERS *in Inflammatory Arthritis*

Inflammatory arthritis can affect the small joints, tendons, and soft tissues in the feet and ankles. This can change how you walk, how shoes feel, and how active you can be.

COMMON IA FOOT AND ANKLE ISSUES

- **Pain and swelling**
  In the toes, midfoot, or ankle.
- **Stiffness**
  Especially in the morning or after resting.
- **Corns, calluses, or blisters**
  From pressure and shoe rubbing.
- **Heel pain**
  (sometimes due to enthesitis—irritation where tendons or ligaments attach to bone).
  Changes in foot or toe shape over time, especially if inflammation isn't well controlled.
- **Skin and nail problems**
  (sometimes linked to reduced mobility, nerve or circulation changes, or medication): dry or cracked skin, ingrown or thick nails, and sores. Any break in the skin can raise the risk of infection, including cellulitis, fungal infections (athlete's foot or nail fungus), and viral infections (verruca's).

THE GOAL OF THIS GUIDE

- **Reduce pressure on sensitive joints**
- **Support safe movement and balance**
- **Keep skin and nails healthy**
  prevent sores, and lower infection risk
- **Spot problems early**
- **Educate and advice**
  Help you choose shoes and daily habits that protect your feet.

The most helpful approach is simple

Small daily habits that help you notice changes early and protect your feet.

Small wins count

A few minutes each day is often more helpful than doing everything once in a while.



QUICK DAILY FOOT CHECK *(60 seconds)*

A quick daily check helps you spot problems early, often before they become painful or start to affect how you walk.

PICK A REGULAR TIME

Morning (before socks/shoes)
Or, Evening (when socks come off).



Step 1. LOOK

(both feet and ankles). Check the tops, soles, heels and sides, between the toes, and around the ankles.
If it's hard to reach, use a mirror or phone camera, or ask a family member/care.

Step 2. FEEL

Compare left and right for warmth, swelling, tenderness, or new "hot spots".

Step 3. WALK

Notice how you walk. Watch for a limp, avoiding pressure on one foot, or new stiffness.

If you notice changes, record them and contact a podiatrist, your rheumatology team or your GP. Bring your notes and photos. Early support can stop small issues becoming bigger problems.

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QUICK DAILY FOOT CHECK *Continued...*



GET URGENT ADVICE IF:

- **New swelling** (especially on one side)
- **A warm/hot area**
- **New or worsening redness**
- **Significant or rapidly worsening pain**
- **Pus/fluid or a bad smell**
- **A wound that isn't healing**
- **Feeling unwell, fever**
- **Spreading redness**
- **Quickly increasing pain (urgent)**

Contact your Podiatrist, your GP or by calling UK: NHS 111; **call 999 if severe or an emergency.**

OTHER CHANGES TO NOTE:

- **New stiffness:** Occurring daily and lasting more than 30mins.
- **New joint pain:** Persisting for more than 6 weeks.
- **Swelling with sweating:** Might indicate inflammation.
- **Skin:** Dryness, cracks, blisters, cuts, sores, changes in colour or thickness.
- **Nails:** Thick or crumbly nails, colour change, painful or ingrown edges.
- **Pressure/fit:** New callus/corn, rubbing, sock/shoe marks, socks feel tighter.
- **Shape:** New lump/bump, toes changing position, foot shape changing.

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SKIN, NAILS *and Pressure Points*

SKIN CARE BASICS *for feet.*

- **Keep skin clean and dry**

Wash feet daily with warm water and mild soap. Avoid long soaks. If sensation is reduced, test water temperature with your elbow. Pat dry well, especially between the toes.

- **Surgical spirit spray**

Light spray between toes only if skin is intact. Avoid if skin is broken, sore, or cracked. Stop if it stings or makes skin too dry.

- **Moisturise daily**

Helps prevent dryness and cracks. Use a foot cream with 10% urea. Ingredients like glycerine, hyaluronic acid, and ceramides can also help.

- **Thick hard skin/callus or heel cracks**

Consider a heel balm with stronger softening (“keratolytic”) ingredients such as urea 25% or lactic acid. Do not use on broken skin.

- **Socks and shoes**

Change socks daily. Rotate shoes to let them air out and dry.





BLISTERS *treat early.*

- **Cover and reduce friction**

Change footwear, add padding.

- **Do not burst the blister.**

- **If it breaks**

Clean gently, cover, and watch for redness, heat, pus, or increasing pain and ask about podiatry support.

CALLUSES/CORNS *do's & don'ts.*

- **DO**

Use a pumice stone gently after bathing (light pressure only).

Reduce rubbing with better-fitting shoes, padding, or insoles/inserts.

- **AVOID**

Cutting calluses yourself.

Strong corn/verruca removal acids unless supervised by a podiatry/healthcare professional (they can burn skin).

NAIL CARE

- **Trim nails straight across**
Don’t cut too short or down the sides.

- **File sharp corners**

- **Thick, painful, or you often get ingrown nails**
Ask about podiatry support.

- **Cuticle care**
Avoid cutting, picking, or pushing back the cuticles around your toenails - damaged skin can let infection in.

- **Avoid acrylic nails and gel/acrylic polish**
They can further damage nails.

IF YOU CAN’T REACH YOUR FEET

- **Keep skin clean**
Use an antimicrobial spray to help keep skin clean and reduce infection risk (e.g., Effigerm Spray) as directed.

- **Keep skin hydrated**
Use a spray moisturiser or apply cream using a ‘Pedi Stick’. **Watch video guide here** →

- **Regular appointments**
Regular podiatry visits may help prevent complications.

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SHOES, INSOLES & SOCKS
The Big Difference Makers

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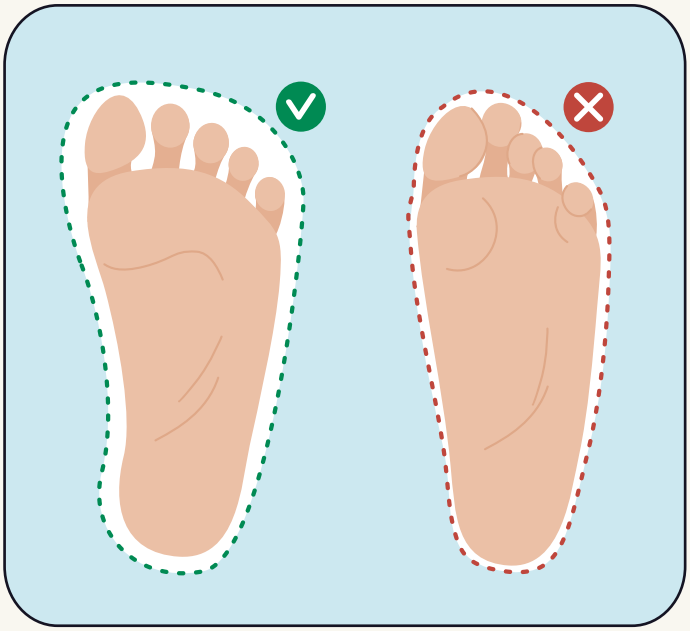
Footwear can reduce stress on inflamed joints and make walking easier.

SUPPORTIVE SHOE FEATURES
Look for these:

- [ ] **Wide Toe Box -** toes can spread without being squeezed.
- [ ] **Firm Heel Counter -** back of shoe feels stable, not collapsible.
- [ ] **Cushioned Heel and Forefoot -** shock absorption.
- [ ] **Supportive Midsole -** not too floppy.
- [ ] **Low, Stable Heel -** avoid high heels.
- [ ] **Soft Uppers -** soft leather or stretchy materials.
- [ ] **Secure Fastening -** Laces or Velcro, more adjustable, allows for swelling.
- [ ] **Rocker Sole -** may reduce forefoot/ toe joint strain for some people.
- [ ] **Enough Depth -** room for toe changes and insoles/orthotics.

RED FLAGS IN SHOES
Avoid these:

- [ ] **Tight across the toes or rubbing anywhere.**
- [ ] **Worn-out soles -** tilting, uneven wear, loss of grip.
- [ ] **Bends in the middle "like a taco" -** too flexible where support is needed.



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Continued...

SHOES, INSOLES & SOCKS *Continued...*

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INSERTS/ORTHOTICS:

- [ ] Over-the-counter insoles may help mild symptoms and pressure points.
- [ ] Custom orthotics may help with deformity, persistent pain, or instability.
- [ ] If you use orthotics: bring them to appointments and check fit regularly.

SOCKS:

- [ ] Smooth seams; breathable fabric.
- [ ] Not tight at the toes or calf.
- [ ] Consider cushioned socks for pressure spots.



NOTES: Best shoes I have....

TYPES OF SHOES
Shoe Shopping Guide


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Seek podiatry advice for individual guidance.
Note: Fit matters more than brand. If you wear orthotics, choose shoes with removable insoles.

Standard or Narrow Feet with Toe Pain
Standard width with a roomier toe box:

- [ ] **Altra:** foot-shaped toe box; support varies by model.
- [ ] **Topo Athletic:** roomy toe box; secure midfoot and heel, cushioning.

Supportive Walking/Running Brands
often stable and cushioned:

- [ ] **Brooks:** walking/running range; several stable models.
- [ ] **Asics:** supportive trainers with firm heel counters.
- [ ] **Saucony:** supportive daily walking/ running shoes.
- [ ] **New Balance:** wide widths and extra-depth options.
- [ ] **HOKA:** high cushioning; strong rocker-sole options.

Comfort/Orthotic-Friendly Brands
often extra depth + wider fits:

- [ ] **Vionic:** built-in arch support in many styles.
- [ ] **Orthofeet:** extra depth; wide sizes; soft uppers for swelling.
- [ ] **Drew:** extra depth suitable for orthotics.
- [ ] **Joya:** cushioned soles to reduce impact.
- [ ] **Fitville:** wide toe box, heel stabiliser, shock absorption, slip-resistant soles.
- [ ] **Billy:** FlipTop wrap-around zip opening, wide size options.

Dress/Casual Options
that can still be supportive (model-dependent)

- [ ] **ECCO:** often stable with good heel structure.
- [ ] **Birkenstocks:** supportive footbeds in sandals/clogs (not ideal for everyone).
- [ ] **CALLA:** wide toe box with standard heel; arch support; removable insoles; soft leather for sensitive areas

FOOT MEASUREMENT CHECKLIST

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Measure every time you need new shoes, as foot shape can change with inflammatory conditions.

NAME: _____ **DATE:** _____

SOCKS: ☐ **Thin** ☐ **Normal** ☐ **Thick** **INSOLES/ORTHOTICS:** ☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**

BEFORE YOU START

- ☐ **Measure in the late afternoon/ evening.**
- ☐ **Stand on a hard floor** (not carpet).
- ☐ **Use full body weight on the foot being measured.**
- ☐ **Measure both feet** (use the larger result for sizing).

Step 1. FOOT LENGTH

- ☐ **Place foot on paper** (heel down, foot relaxed).
- ☐ **Trace foot** (pencil straight up/down).
- ☐ **Mark heel back point.**
- ☐ **Measure heel-to-toe distance.**

RECORD:

Left length: _____ cms

Right length: _____ cms

Step 2. FOOT WIDTH

- ☐ **On the foot trace, mark the widest part.**
- ☐ **Draw a straight line across.**
- ☐ **Measure the width.**

RECORD:

Left width: _____ cms

Right width: _____ cms

Step 3. SHOE FIT CHECKS

- ☐ **Standing,** toes should have roughly thumb-width space in front.
- ☐ **With your foot slid forward,** you should fit roughly one finger behind your heel.
- ☐ **Heel should not lift much when walking.**
- ☐ **No pinching** across the widest part of the forefoot.

NOTES: (brand/model)

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MANAGING FOOT AND ANKLE PAIN *and Swelling*

Pain around the foot and ankle can arise from various factors, including poor circulation, nerve damage, inflammation, and badly fitted footwear. Consult your podiatrist for advice on circulation and nerve issues, or for guidance on footwear.

This home guide offers simple ways to manage day-to-day pain, stiffness, and swelling. It does not replace medical advice. If symptoms are new, worsening, or severe, contact your Podiatrist, GP or Rheumatologist.

PACE ACTIVITIES
protect your joints.

- Break tasks into 10–15 minute blocks with short rests.
- Alternate standing/walking with sitting.
- Avoid overdoing it on “good days” (flare-ups often follow).

COLD OR HEAT
choose the right one.

- Cold (10–15 minutes, cloth barrier) helps when the area is hot, swollen, or flaring.
- Heat (warm shower/heat pack) can help stiffness when there is no swelling.
- If heat increases swelling, switch to cold.

REST AND ELEVATE
for swelling.

- Rest when pain rises.
- If your foot/ankle is swollen, elevate above heart level (for example, lying on a sofa/bed with pillows under your legs).

GENTLE MOVEMENT MATTERS

Regular gentle movement is essential for managing arthritis! It helps reduce inflammation, relieve pain, ease stiffness, improve circulation, and support daily activities. A mix of cardio and strength exercises significantly improves your overall health.

To get started... consult a physical exercise instructor, movement specialist, or physiotherapist with expertise in arthritis for a customised exercise plan tailored to your fitness level.

GENTLE FOOT & ANKLE EXERCISES *(1–2 Short Sessions Daily)*

Keep Moving with Care! Your feet contain over 100 muscles and tendons, acting as a scaffolding that supports their bones.

Strengthening these muscles and tendons can relieve foot pain and reduce strain, creating a solid foundation for the rest of your body. This enhances stability, makes movement smoother, and can boost your confidence.

Try these simple foot exercises at home.

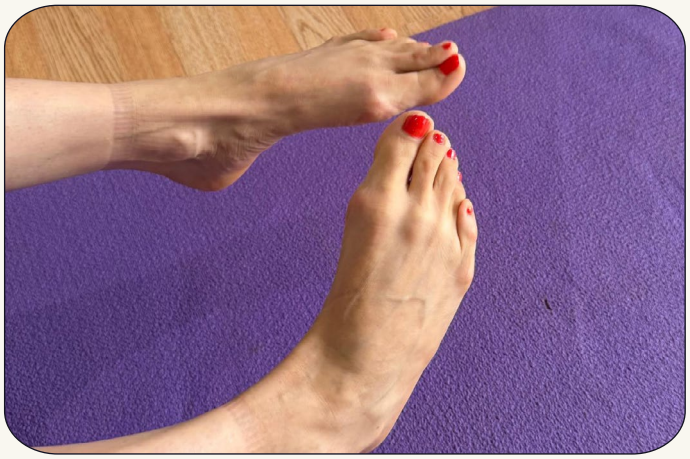
Mild discomfort is acceptable but be sure to avoid sharp pain.

For foot and lower limb exercises tailored to your specific type of arthritis, affected joints, swelling levels, and walking patterns, seek advice from a podiatrist for expert guidance!

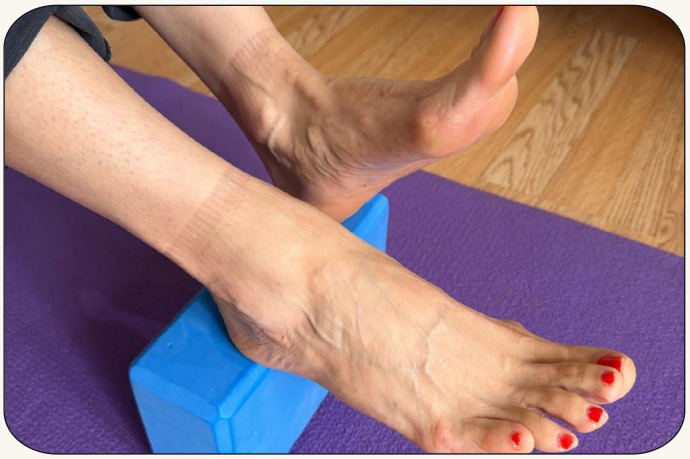
Folllow along at home...



SEATED OR CHAIR-BASED EXERCISES *(Low Pressure on Feet)*



Ankle Circles: Rotate your ankle slowly in both directions.



Point + Flex: Alternate pointing your toes and flexing them back.



Toe Spreads: Spread your toes apart and then bring them back together.



Ankle In/Out: Move your foot inward and outward gently.

IMPORTANT

Stop and rest if pain increases sharply or if the area feels significantly worse afterward.

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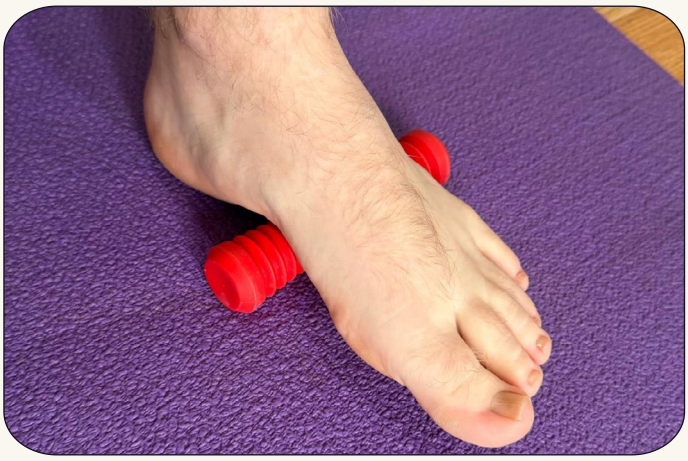
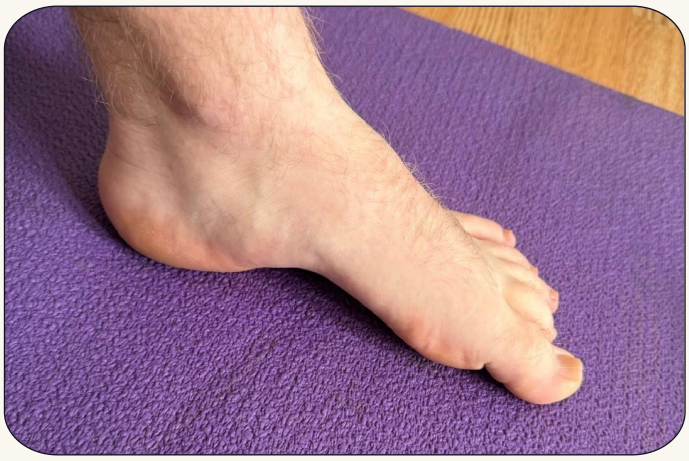
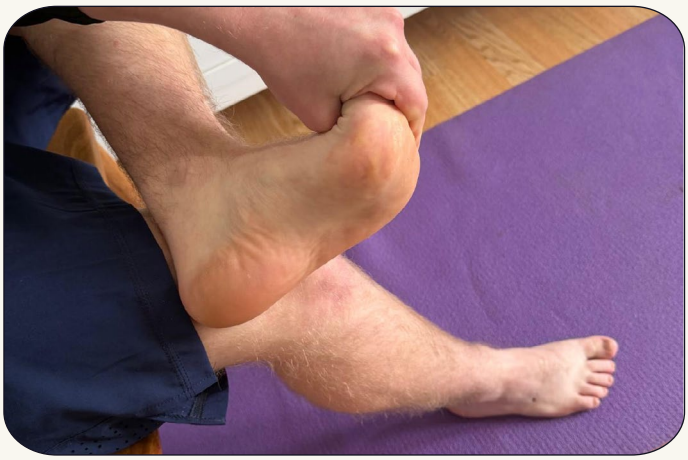
BEST FOR HEEL PAIN



Cold Rolling: Roll the sole of your foot in both directions over a chilled bottle or roller for relief.



Short Foot Exercise: Pull your toes towards your heel while keeping the toes on the ground.



Plantar Fascia Stretch: In a seated position, cross one foot over your knee, hold the base of your toes, and gently pull back towards your body for 15-20 seconds.



Achilles Tendon + Plantar Fascia Stretch: Use a towel, or resistance band around the soles of both feet. Keeping your knees straight, pull your toes towards your body and hold for 20 to 30 seconds, repeating 2 to 3 times.

IMPORTANT

Stop and rest if pain increases sharply or if the area feels significantly worse afterward.

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STAND-UP BASED EXERCISES

(More Pressure on Feet: Best for Achilles Tendon Pain)



Knee to Wall Push: Stand facing a wall and place both hands on it at shoulder height. Step one foot forward, hand width from the wall. Bend your front knee toward the wall while keeping your back knee straight.
You should feel a stretch in your calf. Relax and repeat these 7 to 10 times, then switch to the other leg!



Calf Raises: Stand and gently raise your heels while keeping your toes on the ground.

IMPORTANT

Stop and rest if pain increases sharply or if the area feels significantly worse afterward.

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COMPRESSION

Light compression socks can reduce swelling for some people. Stop if you get numbness, colour change, increased pain, or tingling. If you have circulation problems or diabetes, check with a clinician before using compression.

MEDICINES

Take pain relief and anti-inflammatory medicines only as advised for you. Let your GP/rheumatology team know about flare-ups and review medicines regularly (especially if you have stomach, kidney, heart, or bleeding risks).

GET URGENT HELP *if you:*

- **Sudden severe pain, new deformity, or you cannot weight-bear.**
- **A hot, very red joint with fever or feeling unwell.**
- **Rapidly increasing swelling, calf pain, or shortness of breath.**
- **New numbness, weakness, or skin colour change.**



STEP UP YOUR FOOT HEALTH
The Perks of Regular Podiatry

Keep your feet happy and healthy with regular visits to a podiatrist! They'll tailor a management plan just for you, ensuring your feet stay in optimal condition.

What to Bring:

- **Your favourite comfy shoes.**
- **Any orthotics you use.**
- **A list of your medications.**
- **A quick note detailing where it hurts, what worsens it, and treatments you've tried.**



What Your Podiatrist Can Do:

- **Check circulation and sensation (neuropathy).**
- **Treat corns and calluses,** while sharing prevention tips.
- **Provide nail care** for thickened or ingrown nails.
- **Address skin issues** like fungal and viral infections.
- **Suggest the best footwear** to ease pressure on your feet.
- **Create custom insoles or orthoses** for extra comfort.
- **Use padding and offloading techniques** for sore spots.
- **Assess your gait** to reduce pain in knees, hips, or back.
- **Offer advanced treatments** like shockwave therapy for Achilles and heel pain.
- **Use ultrasound** to monitor inflammation and manage pain, including guided steroid and hyaluronic acid injections.
- **Perform minor surgeries** for ingrown toenails, verruca's, and more.
- **Refer you to specialists** if needed (imaging, rheumatology, vascular, or surgery).

CONTACTS & SUPPORT
keep this page handy

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Your Healthcare Contacts (fill in)

GP / Primary care: _____ **Tel:** _____

Rheumatology team / Nurse specialist:

_____ **Tel:** _____

Podiatry / Foot clinic: _____ **Tel:** _____

Orthotics service (insoles/braces):

_____ **Tel:** _____

Physio (if involved): _____ **Tel:** _____

Helpful organisations (UK)

Arthritis UK – information, helpline, local support **https://www.arthritis-uk.org**

National Rheumatoid Arthritis Society (NRAS) – RA support and education **https://nras.org.uk/**

Psoriatic Arthritis Association (PAPAA) – PsA information and support **https://www.papaa.org/**

NASS (National Axial Spondyloarthritis Society) – axSpA support **https://nass.co.uk/**

Arthritis Action – self-management support and community **https://www.arthritisaction.org.uk/**

Vasculitis UK – **https://www.vasculitis.org.uk/**

Lupus UK – **https://www.lupusuk.org.uk/**

Podiatry (find a professional) – Royal College of Podiatry **https://rcpod.org.uk/**

Healthy Footwear Guide - https://www.healthy-footwear-guide.com

Local support group / community notes

Group Name: _____

When/Where: _____

Contact: _____

CONTACTS & SUPPORT

Urgent help

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If you think it's an emergency (e.g. severe worsening pain/swelling, fever, hot red joint, rapidly spreading redness, sudden inability to weight-bear), contact:

NHS services

NHS 111 (urgent advice, not life-threatening): 111 or https://111.nhs.uk/

Emergency: 999

Find local NHS services: https://www.nhs.uk/service-search/

My Notes (what to tell a clinician quickly)

Diagnosis / Conditions: _____

Current meds (incl. biologics/steroids)**:** _____

Allergies: _____

Typical flare signs in my feet: _____

What Helps: _____



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