

Patient Education Program (PEP) – Class Descriptions

You must register in advance to attend education classes.

To register, e-mail: harjinder.lally@vch.ca or call: 604-875-4021

1. Steps to Managing Your Arthritis

This class is highly recommended for those who feel a little unsure about managing their arthritis. In this class you will learn: 1) about osteoarthritis and inflammatory arthritis; 2) the common causes of pain and other arthritis symptoms; 3) about the Mary Pack Arthritis Centre and other treatment services available in the Lower Mainland 4) about our patient education classes; 5) how to put what you learn into action, so that you can manage your arthritis.

2. Managing Pain – What can I do to feel better?

You will learn how we feel pain, the cause of arthritis pain, and various factors that contribute to your experience of pain. This class covers a variety of strategies and skills to help manage your pain, from using heat and ice to relaxation techniques. It does not cover pharmacological pain control.

3. Understanding Exercise – What types of exercise do I need?

How can you exercise when joints hurt? Participants will learn about different types of exercise as well as benefits and barriers for these types of exercises. Strategies for overcoming barriers will be discussed. Participants will learn how to judge if they are doing the right amount of exercise. A variety of community exercise resources will be introduced.

4. Managing Fatigue – How can I save my energy?

You will learn how fatigue relates to arthritis and how it can affect daily life. This class teaches effective strategies to help you make the best of your energy and get a good night's sleep, from pacing activities to good sleep habits.

5. Healthy Eating & Weight Management – How can I fit this into my life?

These three sessions are designed for people interested in the basic concepts of healthy eating and ways to manage body weight to improve health. How to make wise food choices from Canada's Food Guide, what foods to eat when feeling unwell and the pros and cons of current weight management programs/strategies will be discussed.

6. Managing Activities (Arms/Hands) – How do I get things done when my arms and hands hurt?

If pain or loss of movement in your hands, elbows, or shoulders makes life difficult, this class can help! You will learn ways to get things done with less pain and stress on your joints. It will help you find solutions to problems, such as using adapted tools and splints, and lets you share what you have found to be helpful with others.

7. Managing Activities (Legs/Feet) – How do I get things done when my legs and feet hurt?

If pain or loss of movement in your feet, knees, or hips makes moving around difficult, this class can help! You will learn how to reduce your pain and put less stress on your joints. It will discuss the benefits of wearing supportive shoes, orthotics, and braces.

8. Complementary Therapies – What works? What's safe?

These six sessions are designed for people who have questions about other therapies used to manage arthritis such as diet, herbal/dietary supplements, techniques such relaxation, visualization and meditation, and treatments such as acupuncture and energy healing. Learn how to research different therapies, make informed choices, and how to evaluate the safety and effectiveness of these therapies.

9. Preventing and Managing Osteoporosis – What do I need to know?

This class is designed for people who have osteoporosis secondary to arthritis, those at risk for developing osteoporosis, and those who would like to learn about the prevention and management of osteoporosis. Specific exercises for osteoporosis will also be included.

10. Managing Inflammatory Arthritis – What is inflammatory arthritis and how can I deal with it?

These three sessions are designed for people with inflammatory arthritis, such as rheumatoid arthritis, psoriatic arthritis and poly-inflammatory arthritis. The first session will review the meaning of joint swelling and damage, how the disease is diagnosed, blood tests, the risk of complications, and new approaches to managing arthritis with medications. Next, learn how to perform a body scan on yourself and assess what joints are “active”, and understand the meaning of a “flare” and how to manage it. Also, learn the differences between physical activity and therapeutic exercise, and how to problem solve which activities to do at the different stages of disease activity.

11. Managing Osteoarthritis – What is osteoarthritis and how can I deal with it?

This class is designed for people with osteoarthritis. By the end of the session you will know the meaning of osteoarthritis, learn skills for management, and understand the use of medications for osteoarthritis. Educational resources for osteoarthritis management will be provided.

12. Community Resources – Financial and other benefits available to someone living with a disability

This class is suitable for any type of arthritis. During the session we will be covering such topics as: what are the different types of subsidized housing and how does one apply, what disability pensions are there for someone who is no longer able to work, and what are the different ways of saving money when living on a limited income. This session will be adapted to the needs of those who are attending. All participants will leave with a manual of community resources.

13. Stress Management – What is stress and how do I manage it?

These three sessions are designed for people with any type of arthritis. We will review signs and symptoms of stress, the stress response, techniques for becoming more self-aware, and strategies for coping with stress and breaking the stress cycle. Other topics will include negative thinking and strategies for changing how we think, problem solving, goal setting, and common types of relaxation exercises.

14. Navigating the Healthcare System

In these two sessions, we will discuss ways to build a health care team that meets your needs. Topics will include how to build a team you trust, how to develop good relationships with the members of your team, and common pitfalls and strategies in navigating the healthcare system. We will also talk about your “informal” support team (e.g. family and friends), strategies for obtaining support from others, and how to be an effective communicator.

15. Managing Emotions – What is this emotional roller coaster and how do I get off?

These two sessions are designed for people with any type of arthritis. We will review the common types of loss associated with arthritis, common emotional reactions, and strategies for dealing with these losses. Other topics will include signs and symptoms of depression, turning anger into action and the importance of acceptance and putting joy back into your life.

16. Biologic Medications for Inflammatory Arthritis

This class is for people who are new to biologic medications, or are currently on a biologic and considering a change in medication. Learn about the different types of biologic medications and how they can help manage inflammatory arthritis. Also learn about when they are used, the benefits, risks, and important things to remember when taking biologics.