Deutsche Rheuma-Liga: this is how we help

Advisory services
Deutsche Rheuma-Liga (German Rheumatism Association) provides independent advice to persons suffering from rheumatism. The association works in the fields of politics, society and research to promote the interests of rheumatism sufferers.

Telephone
Do you require information? Are you looking for support? Please use our telephone hotline: 018 04-600000. A call costs 20 cents, regardless of its duration. Calls from mobile phones cost max. 42 cents.

Internet
On the Internet at www.rheuma-liga.de you will find a great deal of useful information, including a list of specialists, physicians and therapists, plus tips for physical exercises.

Offer your help: what can you do?

Volunteering
If you wish to help, Rheuma-Liga will be glad of your support! There are no special requirements. Rheuma-Liga will gladly help you to find a suitable task. Because of their language skills, people with a foreign background in particular can be very helpful. Voluntary helpers support Deutsche Rheuma-Liga on an honorary and unpaid basis.

How to become a member!
Simply contact Deutsche Rheuma-Liga by telephone or email. We’ll be happy to send you information material and the membership form. As a member you have access to lots of information, suggestions for exercise and legal advice.

Rheumatism – facts & figures

The illness
• Around 17 million people suffer from rheumatism
• Of these, 6 million have chronic back pain, which leads to a disability
• At least 5 million have some form of arthrosis
• At least 4 million people suffer from osteoporosis
• Around 1.5 million people suffer from fibromyalgia
• There are over 100 different syndromes
• Children and adolescents can also suffer from these conditions

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Information on medical issues has been summarised in a clear, understandable way. This information makes no claim to completeness.

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Benjamin O’Daniel
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Deutsche Rheuma-Liga

Rheumatism
Those afflicted by rheumatism suffer pains in their joints, bones, muscles or sinews. In Germany more than 17 million people suffer from rheumatism, in other words almost one person in four. There are over 100 different forms of rheumatism.

The association
Deutsche Rheuma-Liga serves the interests of persons suffering from rheumatism. The self-help organisation has over 300,000 members. The individual state organisations within Rheuma-Liga provide help everywhere in Germany. They organise forms of exercise and treatment for those suffering from rheumatism. The association also campaigns for adequate recognition of this illness by government.

How to obtain information
Deutsche Rheuma-Liga self-help groups meet in many cities. In addition the organisation offers its own magazine, “mobil”, together with brochures, flyers, a telephone hotline, a website and a great deal more. Rheumatism sufferers are provided with information and the opportunity to exchange experiences.

An example: Harry falls ill with rheumatism

The joints of his hands and fingers hurt
He always feels tired. The pain becomes increasingly severe. His wife no longer knows what to do.

They consult their doctor, but the doctor is unable to help them either. He sends Harry to the university hospital, where there are specialists. They examine Harry and take a blood test. The doctors find that Harry is suffering from rheumatism.

For Harry the news comes as a shock. What will happen now? How will the doctors treat him? What can he do to help himself?

Problems
Anyone afflicted by a chronic illness is faced with many problems. The strain can be both physical and psychological. There are often difficulties with doctors, insurance companies or at work.

Solidarity
Germany has a well-established principle of “self-help”. People with the same illness come together in solidarity. There are many self-help communities in Germany. These are organised in the form of associations, like a sports club for example.

Voluntary and without payment
More than 11,000 people work within Rheuma-Liga on a voluntary basis. They advise other sufferers, lead self-help groups, organise talks and forms of exercise. They receive no money for their efforts. They help because they enjoy helping others. Many of them also wish to give something in return for the help they themselves have received.

Early treatment can help
Harry contacts Deutsche Rheuma-Liga. He receives information about aspects of the illness, methods of treatment and exercise possibilities. On the Deutsche Rheuma-Liga website he also finds a list of specialist doctors.

People who still know little about the illness can get together with other sufferers and exchange information. This helps them feel better and gives them a feeling of security.

It isn’t just old people who suffer from rheumatism. It can also affect children, adolescents and young adults.

Because some forms of rheumatism are quite rare, many general practitioners have little specialist knowledge of the illness. Families and friends are also generally unable to provide help.

On the other hand it is often the case that fast and early treatment can be highly effective. Pains can be reduced and sometimes the progress of the illness can be arrested. However, it is essential for the rheumatism to be diagnosed at an early stage. Those who seek medical help too late will often have more serious health problems later.

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