

## **HYPERMOBILITY SYNDROME - WHAT IS IT AND HOW TO MANAGE IT!**

Do you know someone who is “double-jointed”? Always spraining ankles or even dislocating knee caps and shoulders? They may have joint hypermobility syndrome.

This is a condition that features joints that easily move beyond the normal range expected for a particular joint. Doctors use the Beighton scale to diagnose this syndrome with excess mobility in specific joints – little finger, thumbs, elbows, knees and lumbar spine. It has been estimated that 10-15% of normal children have hypermobile joints. Pregnant women can mimic hypermobility with increased laxity of their soft tissue in preparation for childbirth.

This syndrome may present no symptoms and so no treatment is required. If however there is recurrent injury and pain, physiotherapy can be very useful for the following reasons:

- to improve muscle strength and fitness
- to improve posture
- to improve balance/proprioception
- to correct the movement of individual joints

A careful assessment of problems specific to the patient enables the physiotherapist to tailor a treatment programme. Most importantly exercises to promote stability around those hypermobile joints.

It is also important to manage the exercise with “pacing” i.e. balancing periods of activity with periods of rest. The good news is that with the ageing process, hypermobile joints usually become stiffer and so less problematic! So if this is a familiar picture of yourself or someone you know, physiotherapy assessment and treatments can help in the management of this syndrome.