

Real Life  
**ACTIVE  
PATIENT  
STORY**

Case study:

**EAMON MAHON, 58,** used to find that he gained little from a visit to his doctor and often left the surgery with nothing more than a sense of frustration.

**T**here is an old saying that the more effort you put into something, the more benefit you will reap - and this is also true when it comes to your arthritis treatment. Unfortunately a huge number of people take a backseat when it comes to their condition, believing that the doctor's input is the only one that matters. But, in reality, the opposite is the case as research has shown that an active contribution from the patient makes a big difference to the quality of their treatment.

**Health organiser**

In response to a recent study carried out by Arthritis Ireland, which found that more than a quarter of patients feel that their condition could be explained better to them by their doctor, a personal file, called 'My Health Organiser', has been developed to encourage you to take control and play your part so you can receive the best treatment possible.

This clever new document has been designed to enable you to keep your own health records – including diagnoses, medications, treatments, and other information, as well as providing helpful tips, like recommended questions to ask, and advice on how best to prepare for your appointment with your doctor.

The organiser also hosts a useful contacts list and an appointment keeper, where you can make note of upcoming appointments, and take notes on pain that they have

experienced (on a scale of one to ten) and a body outline to mark with an 'X' where the pain was located. This will help you to describe your pain to your doctor in uncomplicated language.



'My Health Organiser' will be available from Action Arthritis Week (October 10th-15th) and can be ordered by contacting Arthritis Ireland on local 1890 252846 or 01-6618188.

**On the verge of giving up on medical help for his knee osteoarthritis, Eamon registered for Arthritis Ireland's 'Living Well with Arthritis' self-management course where he learned the skills necessary to take control of his treatment.**

*Eamon continued. "They say knowledge is power and that's definitely true in this case!"*

*"With the new doctor I wanted to begin as I meant to continue so before I went to see him I made a list of all the questions I wanted to ask; things like, 'is there anything else I can do that might improve my mobility?'"*

*The doctor seemed really encouraged by the fact that I was so interested in my treatment and he gave me information on lots of different things, like the importance of exercise."*

*Eamon continues to keep up-to-date records of his consultations to this day and has built up a great relationship with his doctor. "We're on very friendly terms now and that really helps because I know he cares and he's doing his best for me. It also means that I'm a bit of an expert myself when it comes to arthritis, especially compared to the little I knew before."*

*Although 'My Health Organiser' wasn't around when Eamon began playing an active part in his treatment, he says he will certainly be using it from now on. "It has a nice organised format for storing information and the suggested questions are good because the memory isn't as sharp as it once was!"*

**Eamon says:**  
*"I found I was in a situation where very little communication was going on between myself and my doctor," Eamon told Arthritis Life. "He'd ask me how I was and I'd say 'grand'; then he'd examine my knees for a moment and write me out a new prescription. It was just going on and on in a circle and I felt like I wasn't making any progress. Then I did a self-management course with Arthritis Ireland and learned skills to get more from my doctor appointments."*

*Eamon from Balinteer, in Dublin, decided that he needed a clean slate with his treatment and decided to start afresh with a new doctor. His previous doctor was very helpful in providing him with copies of his health records up to that point and Eamon made his own copy of these before handing them over to his new doctor.*

*"I realised that by having control of all the information about my treatment I could become as much of an expert about my case as my doctor was,"*

