

# What is rheumatoid arthritis?

Rheumatoid arthritis (RA for short) is a sickness involving your immune system (body's natural defense against sickness) that leads to inflammation (painful swelling) in various organs. RA usually affects the joints and causes pain, swelling, and stiffness (hard to move). If RA is not treated well or on time, the inflammation can lead to joint damage and deformities (something that is not a normal shape).



What are the most common

signs of RA?

Sometimes the inflammation from RA can also affect other parts of the body, including the skin, eyes, heart, lungs, and blood vessels.



## Aches and pains

RA usually affects your fingers, wrists, ankles, and toes.

RA can also affect your elbows and knees.

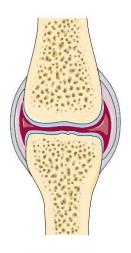
RA usually affects both sides of the body.

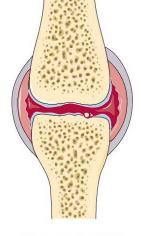
Joint stiffness (hard to move) especially in the mornings, that can last several hours

Swelling of your finger, wrist, ankle, toe, elbow, and knee joints

Feeling tired or loss of energy

Lumps on your skin (these are called rheumatoid nodules)





Normal joint Rheumatoid arthritis



<sup>&</sup>quot;Osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis - Normal joint Osteoarthritis Rheumatoid arthritis" and "Rheumatoid arthritis 1 -- Smart-Servier" by Laboratoires Servier is licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0.

### Allergy, Immunology & Rheumatology



# Who is at risk for RA?

 No one is sure what causes RA or other autoimmune diseases.



- RA starts between 40 and 60 years of age.
- Women are much more likely than men to get RA.
- People who smoke are more likely to get RA.
- People with close family members with RA are more likely to get RA.

RA is not contagious. You can't "catch" RA or "give" RA to someone.

## More about RA:

- RA is a chronic disease (lasts for your lifetime).
- Symptoms often change over time, being more active at certain times and quiet at other times.
- Early diagnosis and treatment can help you control your symptoms and prevent long-term damage of your joints and possibly other organs.
- If not adequately treated it can make it hard to work, cause emotional and social problems, increase risk for other conditions such as heart and bone disease, and reduce life expectancy.

# What should you do if you think you have RA?

Contact your primary care doctor to schedule an appointment.

Your doctor may ask questions about your symptoms to help find out if you have RA or another type of arthritis.

You may also need additional blood work and x-rays.

If your doctor suspects that you have RA, they can refer you to the rheumatology clinic.

# **Contact information for the URMC Rheumatology clinic:**



Phone number: 585-486-0901

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