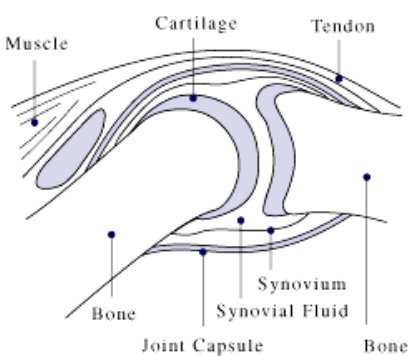


Rheumatoid Arthritis

What Is Rheumatoid Arthritis (RA)?

- RA is different from the wear and tear type of arthritis, called osteoarthritis.
- RA is the most common type of **Inflammatory Arthritis**.
 - *Inflammation* is a term for pain, stiffness, redness, and swelling.
 - *Arthritis* means joint inflammation
- In inflammatory arthritis, instead of protecting the body, the immune system attacks the body, causing inflammation. This is called an autoimmune disease.
- RA is a disease that can affect many joints in the body. It can also cause inflammation in areas like the lungs, heart, and eyes.
- RA can start suddenly, or symptoms can appear over weeks or months.
- RA can happen at any age.
- The cause of RA is unknown.

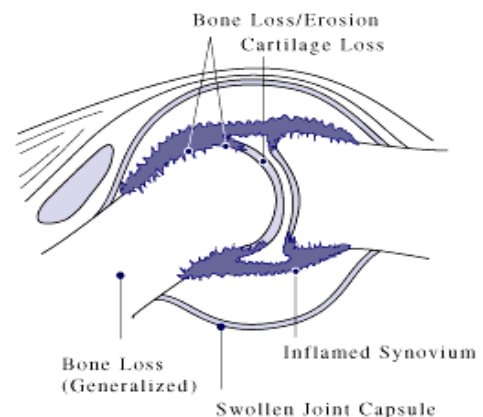
Normal Joint



What Are The Symptoms?

- **Joint pain, swelling**, and sometimes joints are warm and red.
- **Joint stiffness** often worse in the morning
- **Fatigue (tiredness/low energy)**
- **Everyday activities are more difficult**
- These symptoms can change daily, weekly, or monthly.
- A “flare” is when symptoms suddenly get worse. Flares occur due to increased disease activity which increases inflammation.
- Too much inflammation in a joint can cause damage to the bones, cartilage, and ligaments.

Joint Affected by Rheumatoid Arthritis



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This information does not replace the advice given to you by your health care provider.

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Treatment

There is no cure for RA, but there are medications that effectively control it.

Other treatments can also help improve the symptoms:

- **Medications**

A rheumatologist (specialist doctor) prescribes medications to control the disease. Studies prove that early use of RA medications reduces joint damage, future disability, and heart disease risk.

- **Quit smoking**

People with RA are at higher risk for heart disease. Smoking adds to this risk. Smoking raises inflammation in the body and also stops medications from working well.

- **Physical activity**

Exercise lowers inflammation levels in the body. Keep your joints mobile and muscles strong by staying active; this will improve pain and stiffness.

- **Protect your joints**

Always use your joints in ways that avoid too much stress. Reducing stress on the joints can reduce your pain. Ask your therapist for more information about joint protection.

- **Use hot and cold**

Heat helps to relieve pain, stiffness, and sore tight muscles. Cold can help reduce swelling and pain in sore and swollen joints.

- **Manage fatigue (tiredness)**

It is possible to improve sleep and manage your energy – ask your therapist about what you can do.

- **Relaxation and coping skills**

Depression and anxiety are common in RA. Ask your arthritis therapist about resources and support that can help you.

- **Healthy eating**

A healthy diet can reduce inflammation and heart disease risk, and improve overall health. If you are overweight, losing weight can reduce stress to your joints.

- **Complementary therapies**

There are complementary/ alternative therapies that may help improve symptoms, but they are not proven to reduce inflammation enough to stop the joint damage in RA.

Together you and your arthritis healthcare team can create a treatment plan that is right for you. Many people live a full life with RA and you can too!