

July 2013

## Arthritis

The word arthritis is used to describe more than 100 different conditions that cause pain, stiffness, and swelling in the joints. There are two main types of arthritis: inflammatory and non-inflammatory. Each has features that set it apart from other types of joint pain. There are many types of inflammatory arthritis, including rheumatoid arthritis, gout, and arthritis caused by infections. The most common type of non-inflammatory arthritis is osteoarthritis.

### Causes

Osteoarthritis can be caused by various factors, including wear and tear that occurs with time. As the body ages, joints become worn down from years of movement. Osteoarthritis is very common in older adults. Rheumatoid arthritis is caused by a breakdown in the body's immune system. It is not known why this occurs.



### Symptoms

The start of inflammatory arthritis varies from person to person. For some people, the pain can be sudden and intense. For others, the pain is gradual. Symptoms of inflammatory arthritis include swelling, redness, warmth, tenderness, loss of motion or function of the joint, and joint damage.

Osteoarthritis starts slowly, usually over many months or years. Symptoms may include minor swelling and changes in the joint cartilage, which can lead to joint damage, pain, and loss of function. The joints most affected are the knee, hip, and hand.

### Treatment

Your doctor may prescribe medicines to help treat your arthritis. Over-the-counter medicines are often the first treatment choice for arthritic pain. Two main types of medicines are used: simple pain relievers and non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medicines (NSAIDs). These medications reduce swelling and pain.

Let your doctor know about any over-the-counter products you are taking in addition to what he or she has prescribed.

### Self-Care

- Over-the-counter products may be helpful. Glucosamine sulfate and chondroitin sulfate have been used to treat osteoarthritis. They may lessen pain caused by osteoarthritis of the knee and hip and are considered safe.
- Assistive devices may support painful areas or improve function in affected joints. The range of options is broad. Wrist splints, tennis elbow straps, padded arch supports, and heel pads may help reduce stress on joints and relieve some pain.

- Move your joints. Exercise reduces pain, makes you more flexible, energizes you, and increases your overall good health. The type and amount of exercise depends on which joints are involved and the degree of joint inflammation. It should be tailored to your needs. Ask your doctor about good exercises for you.
- Find ways to deal with stress such as meditation, listening to music, biofeedback, or professional counseling. Exercise is also an excellent stress reliever.
- If you still have pain after taking medication, try taking a warm shower, doing some gentle stretching exercises, using an ice pack on the sore area, or just resting the sore joint.
- Lose weight if you are overweight. Excess weight can cause pain in your knees and hips.

### Prevention

The cause of rheumatoid arthritis is unknown but probably occurs for many reasons, including genetic, environmental, and hormonal factors.

There are many causes of osteoarthritis, including natural wear and tear on your body. Taking care of your body—watching your weight, participating in aerobic exercise, and avoiding repetitive stress or trauma on your joints—can delay the onset of osteoarthritis. Losing even a small amount of weight helps reduce stress on your weight-bearing joints.

Symptoms/Signs	Action
Muscle or joint aches after exertion	Use self-care
Joint pain without fever or swelling	Use self-care
Joint pain with fever and sudden, significant swelling or severe pain	Call provider's office
Sudden pain with no apparent cause	Call provider's office
Constant pain that affects your activities	See provider
Pain with fatigue, insomnia	See provider

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## Ounce of Caution Prevents Heat-Related Illness



When weather forecasters talk about a heat index of 90 degrees or above—that's the temperature in the shade—everyone should take extra precautions.

The four most common heat-related illnesses are cramps, fainting, exhaustion and heat strokes. These illnesses occur when the body can no longer cool itself properly.

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## Moving From Grief to Acceptance



After a loss, it's not uncommon for people to experience grief. However, grief is not limited to the loss of a family member, friend, or pet passing away. Grief can manifest from the loss of a job, a move away from close friends, a divorce, a loved one leaving on military assignment, or tough breakup.

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