

# Rheumatoid Arthritis

Each person has specific toxic exposures along with dietary and genetic weaknesses that are causing their symptoms. Toxic exposures can be inorganic like heavy metals, DDT, VOC's, Radio-active waste and any other chemical like food additives or pesticides and fertilizers sprayed on the foods. They can also be organic or living organisms like parasites, bacteria, viruses, or fungi. All the different possible combinations make it difficult to accurately address issues unless you have experienced medical professionals mapping through all your different clinical symptoms.

Dr. Marilyn Tucker founded The Vibrant Health Community to do Symptom Mapping to be able to bring a completely personalized plan for each person. When you join the Vibrant Health Community you have your own medical team of doctor, pharmacist and health coach. This Team specializes in Integrative-Complementary Medicine. They will work with your personal physician to bring you to a place of as much natural healing as your body will allow. For those of you that have health issues that require prescription medications, your Team can help introduce natural measures that can reduce the imbalances and complications that inevitably come with prescription medication. This can reduce side effects and possible additional drugs having to be introduced.

## Definition

Rheumatoid arthritis (RA) is a long-term disease that causes inflammation of the joints and surrounding tissues. It can also affect other organs.

## Alternative Names

RA; Arthritis - rheumatoid

## Causes, incidence, and risk factors

The cause of RA is unknown. It is considered autoimmune disease. The body's immune system normally fights off foreign substances, like viruses. But in an autoimmune disease, the immune system confuses healthy tissue for foreign substances. As a result, the body attacks itself.

RA can occur at any age. Women are affected more often than men.

RA usually affects joints on both sides of the body equally. Wrists, fingers, knees, feet, and ankles are the most commonly affected. The course and the severity of the illness can vary considerably. Infection, genes, and hormones may contribute to the disease.

## Symptoms

The disease usually begins gradually with:

- Fatigue
- Morning stiffness (lasting more than 1 hour)
- Widespread muscle aches
- Loss of appetite
- Weakness

Eventually, joint pain appears. When the joint is not used for a while, it can become warm, tender, and stiff. When the lining of the joint becomes inflamed, it gives off more fluid and the joint becomes swollen. Joint pain is often felt on both sides of the body, and may affect the wrist, knees, elbows, fingers, toes, ankle or neck.

Additional symptoms include:

- Anemia due to failure of the bone marrow to produce enough new red cells
- Eye burning, itching, and discharge
- Hand and feet deformities
- Limited range of motion

- Low-grade fever
- Lung inflammation (pleurisy)
- Numbness or tingling
- Paleness
- Round, painless nodules under the skin (usually a sign of more severe disease)
- Skin redness or inflammation
- Swollen glands

Joint destruction may occur within 1-2 years after the appearance of the disease.

## Signs and tests

A specific blood test is available for diagnosing RA and distinguishing it from other types of arthritis. It is called the anti-CCP antibody test. Other tests that may be done include:

- Complete blood count
- C-reactive protein
- Erythrocyte sedimentation rate
- Joint x-rays
- Rheumatoid factor test (positive in about 75% of people with symptoms)
- Synovial fluid analysis

## Expectations (prognosis)

The course of RA differs from person to person. People with rheumatoid factor or subcutaneous nodules seem to have a more severe form of the disease. People who develop RA at younger ages also have a more rapidly progressive course.

Many people with RA work full-time. However, after many years, about 10% of patients are severely disabled, and unable to do simple daily living tasks such as washing, dressing, and eating.

The average life expectancy for a patient with RA may be shortened by 3 to 7 years. Those with severe forms of RA may die 10-15 years earlier than expected. However, as treatment for rheumatoid arthritis improves, severe disability and life-threatening complications appear to be decreasing.

## Complications

Rheumatoid arthritis is not solely a disease of joint destruction. It can involve almost all organs.

A life-threatening joint complication can occur when the cervical spine becomes unstable as a result of RA.

Rheumatoid vasculitis (inflammation of the blood vessels) is a serious, potentially life-threatening complication of RA. It can lead to skin ulcerations and infections, bleeding stomach ulcers, and nerve problems that cause pain, numbness, or tingling. Vasculitis may also affect the brain, nerves, and heart, which can cause stroke, heart attack, or heart failure.

RA may cause the outer lining of the heart to swell (pericarditis) and cause heart complications. Inflammation of heart muscle, called myocarditis, can also develop. Both of these conditions can lead to congestive heart failure.

## Prevention

Rheumatoid arthritis has no known prevention. However, it is often possible to prevent further damage of the joints with proper early treatment.

Because RA may cause eye complications, patients should have regular eye exams.

## References

US Food and Drug Administration. *FDA Announces Series of Changes to the Class of Marketed Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs)*. Rockville, MD: National Press Office; April 7, 2005. Press Release P05-16.

US Food and Drug Administration. *FDA Issues Public Health Advisory Recommending Limited Use of Cox-2 Inhibitors*. Rockville, MD: National Press Office: December 23, 2004. Talk Paper T04-61.