

# RHEUMATOID ARTHRITIS



**Rheumatoid arthritis** is a chronic condition (long-lasting) that affects the joints causing pain, swelling, and stiffness. Some people may only have the disease for several months or years and then it disappears without causing any damage. In the most severe cases, the disease may last for many years or a lifetime.

## What causes rheumatoid arthritis?

The exact cause of rheumatoid arthritis is unknown, however, it has been proven that the immune system attacks the body's own tissues.

**Some factors that are related to suffering from rheumatoid arthritis are:**

- Heredity
- The environment
- Hormones

## How is rheumatoid arthritis diagnosed?

The primary care physician or rheumatologist can diagnose this condition by taking into consideration your medical history and performing a physical examination, x-rays, and laboratory tests.

**However, rheumatoid arthritis is difficult to diagnose because:**

- There is no specific test to determine the disease
- Symptoms may be the same with other joint diseases
- It may take some time for the full picture to emerge with all the symptoms.

## What is the treatment for rheumatoid arthritis?

Proper treatment aims to eliminate pain, reduce swelling and slow or stop the damage caused by the condition. This will help to improve your quality of life. Treatment varies depending on the severity of the condition, your overall health, and your lifestyle. The goals of the treatment are to eliminate pain, reduce swelling, and delay or stop joint damage. These may include:

- Use of drugs as prescribed by your physician
- Make lifestyle modifications
- Surgery, if necessary
- Alternative therapies

### Recommendations for managing rheumatoid arthritis:

- Learn more about the disease
- Attend all follow-up medical appointments
- Take your drugs as directed
- Maintain a good balance between rest and exercise
- Take care of your joints
- Reduce stress
- Have a healthy diet
- Lead a full and active life

**If you have questions about the management of this disease,  
consult your physician.**

**If for any reason your primary care physician is not available, you may obtain assistance by calling:**

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#### References:

<https://www.niams.nih.gov/health-topics/rheumatoid-arthritis>

<https://medlineplus.gov/rheumatoidarthritis.html>

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