

What Is Rheumatoid Arthritis? (RA)



Rheumatoid Arthritis is a common inflammatory form of arthritis that causes painful, stiff, swollen joints. The immune system attacks healthy tissue causing inflammation and joint damage. As an autoimmune disease, RA can also affect other parts of the body.

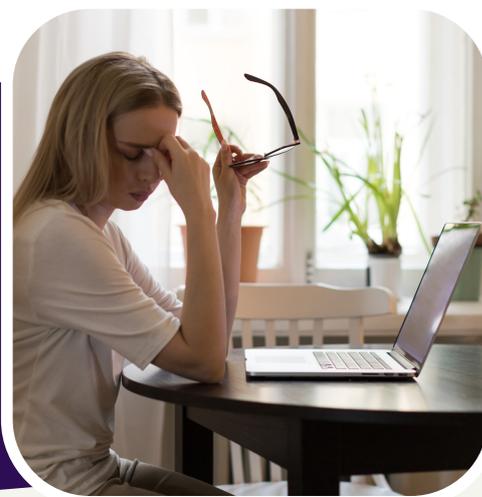
Who Gets Rheumatoid Arthritis?

- RA affects woman three times more often than men
- It usually appears between the ages of 25-50 years

What Are The Symptoms?

Symptoms can vary and can come and go but often include:

- Joint pain
- Stiffness
- Fatigue
- Feeling low
- Depression



How Is It Diagnosed?

- Medical history
- Physical examination
- Blood tests
- X rays and other imaging may be used
- If your doctor suspects RA you should be referred to a Rheumatologist



Medical Management

- Diagnosis
- Monitoring
- Medications may include Nonsteroidal Ant inflammatory drugs (NSAIDS), Disease Modifying drugs (DMARDS), Biological Therapies (Biologics)



How Can I Help Myself?



The pain and unpredictable nature of RA can be hard on people mentally and emotionally. It is natural to feel scared, sad and angry. Acknowledging your feelings and seeking support is important for your health and wellbeing.

Lifestyle choices are an important part of managing symptoms, improving wellbeing and reducing flares. Lifestyle choices include:

- no smoking
- managing stress and fatigue
- joint protection
- healthy activity
- nutrition

Questions To Ask Your Rheumatologist & GP

- How can I keep track of the blood test results used to monitor my RA?
- How will I know if the medication is working, and how long does this take?
- What are the possible side effects of the medication and how often will they occur?
- What should I do to minimise the chance of side effects?
- Whom do I contact if I have concerns about the medication?
- Are there medications that I should stop now that I am beginning this new treatment?
- Whom should I contact – and how quickly – if I have a 'flare'?

For more information:



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Phone: 0800 663 463 / Email: info@arthritis.org.nz



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