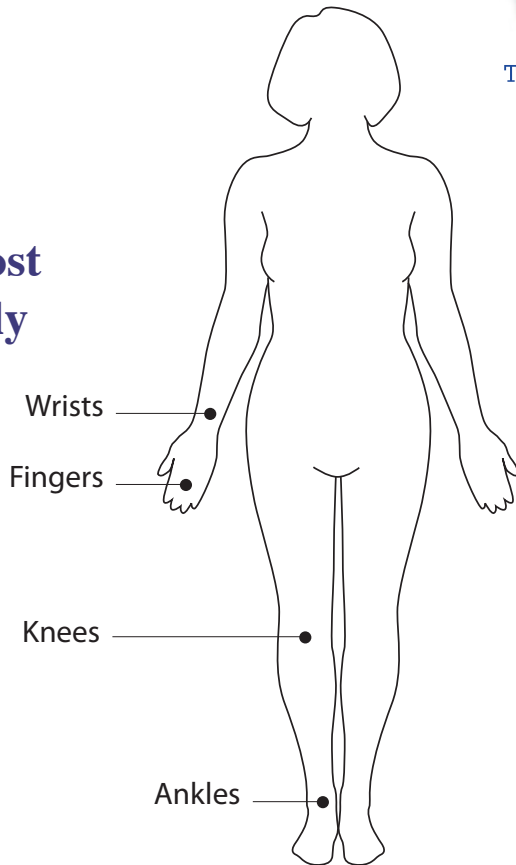


RHEUMATOID ARTHRITIS & YOU

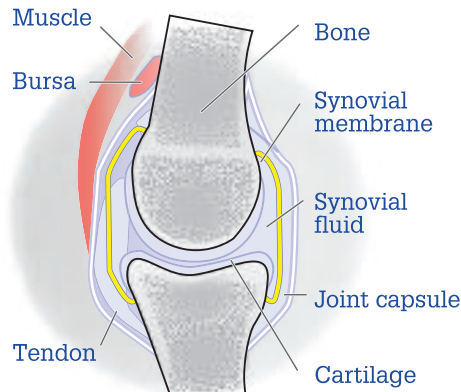
What is Rheumatoid Arthritis?

Rheumatoid arthritis (RA) is a chronic (long-term) disease that causes pain, stiffness, swelling, limited motion and function of your joints most often the small joints in the hands and feet. Inflammation can affect organs as well, like the eyes or lungs.

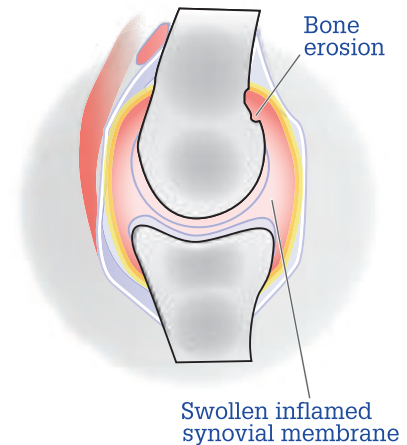
Joints Most Commonly Involved:



Normal Joint



Rheumatoid Arthritis



Help Your Rheumatoid Arthritis:

- Start therapy as soon as possible to avoid joint damage
- Lower your stress and learn to rest and relax
- Heat therapy to soothe joint pain and stiffness
- Cold therapy to relieve a swollen joint
- Orthotics and braces to decrease pain and swelling, improve movement, reduce deformity, and correct alignment
- Lose weight if you are overweight
- Eat a healthy diet to keep weight normal
- Take medications to reduce pain and swelling, and slow down joint damage

Exercise is Important!

- Low-impact aerobic exercises, such as walking
- Strength training
- Exercises given by your physical therapist

For swollen or red joints or when you are tired:

- Rest
- Do gentle range-of-motion exercises
- Do stretching
- Do exercises your physical therapist recommends for these times

Protect your joints when you exercise and during daily activities:

- Pace your activities
- Movement modifications – a physical therapist can help you





Diet & Supplements

- **Daily protein** protects your muscle mass. This would be one deck-of-cards sized serving of chicken, fish, or meat, or two servings of beans.
- **Fruits and Vegetables**, five to seven ½ cup servings a day.
- **Vitamin B supplement** containing B⁶, B¹² and folic acid. B vitamins are found in turkey, tuna fish, whole grains, potatoes, and bananas.
- **Vitamin E** 400 IU daily to prevent inflammation of your joints. Vitamin E is found in eggs, fruits, green leafy vegetables, and olive oil.
- **Vitamin C** 200 mg of each day to slow RA damage to your joints. Vitamin C is found in many fruits and vegetables.
- **Omega-3 fatty acids** 6 grams daily to lessen inflammation. These can be found in some seeds, nuts, and fish but also can be taken as a supplement as either fish oil or borage oil.

**Your RA medical team may include:
rheumatologists, primary care providers, physical therapists,
occupational therapists, and pharmacists.**



Relaxation Techniques Can Help:

- Deep breathing exercises
- Muscle relaxation exercises
- Listening to music
- Visualization activities

Watch For These Side Effects:

- **NSAIDs:** stomach ulcers and bleeding. Your healthcare provider may recommend a medication to protect your stomach.
- **Glucocorticoids:** weight gain, increased blood sugar (may lead to diabetes), and osteoporosis. You may need to take vitamin D and calcium supplements.
- **Disease-modifying Antirheumatic Drugs (DMARDs):** stomach upset. Talk with your healthcare provider if you become pregnant or are going to get a vaccination – as DMARDs could cause serious problems.

Find more information online:

American College of Rheumatology: <http://www.rheumatology.org>

Arthritis Foundation: <http://www.arthritis.org>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: <http://www.cdc.gov/arthritis/basics/rheumatoid.htm>

Medline Plus: <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus>. Search for rheumatoid arthritis