

4. Massage: The light massage of painful muscles may increase blood flow and bring warmth to the muscle.

5. Transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation (TENS): Pain may be reduced with the use of a TENS device. The device sends mild, electrical pulses to nerve endings in the painful area. This blocks pain signals to the brain and changes pain perception.

6. Acupuncture: This is the use of thin needles that are inserted at specific points in the body. It may stimulate the release of natural, pain-relieving chemicals made by the nervous system. The procedure is done by a licensed healthcare provider.

Long-term treatments include:

1. Disease-modifying anti-rheumatic drugs (DMARDs): These prescription medications may slow down the disease and treat any immune system problem linked to the disease.

2. Corticosteroids: Corticosteroids reduce inflammation and swelling. These medications, such as prednisone, can be taken orally or as an injection.

3. Hyaluronic acid therapy: This is a joint fluid that appears to break down in people with Osteoarthritis. It can be injected into a joint, such as the knee, to help relieve symptoms.

4. Surgery: There are many types of surgery, depending on which joints are affected. Surgery options may include arthroscopy, fusion, or joint replacement. Full recovery after surgery takes up to 6 months. A rehabilitation program after surgery is an important part of the treatment.

When should I see my doctor?

If your symptoms get worse or you have new symptoms, let your doctor know.



Living with Arthritis?

Although there is no cure for arthritis, it is important to help keep joints functioning by reducing pain and inflammation. Work on a treatment plan with your doctor that includes medication and therapy. The following lifestyle changes can improve your quality of life:

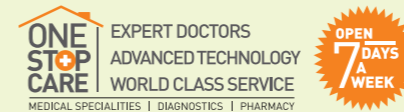
- **Weight loss:** Extra weight puts more stress on weight-bearing joints, such as the hips and knees
- **Exercise:** Exercises that help reduce joint pain and stiffness include swimming, walking, low-impact aerobic exercise, and range-of-motion exercises. Stretching exercises may also help keep the joints flexible
- **Activity and rest:** To reduce stress on your joints, alternate between activity and rest. This can help protect your joints and lessen your symptoms
- **Use of assistive devices:** Canes, crutches, and walkers can help to keep stress off certain joints and improve balance. Equipments like dressing aids, 'reachers' and 'grabbers' also help people to extend their reach and reduce straining
- **Problems of long-term use of medications:** Long-term use of some anti-inflammatory medications can lead to stomach bleeding. Work with your health care provider to develop a plan to reduce this risk

Tips to help you get the most from a visit to your doctor:

- Before your visit, write down questions you want answered
- Bring someone with you to help you ask questions and remember what your healthcare provider tells you
- At the visit, write down the names of new medicines, treatments, or tests, and any new instructions your healthcare provider gives you
- If you have a follow-up appointment, write down the date, time, and purpose for that visit
- Know how you can contact your healthcare provider, if you have questions



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ARTHRITIS AND ITS TREATMENT

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What is Arthritis?

Arthritis means inflammation of a joint. Arthritis is usually chronic, which means that it is ongoing. There are more than 100 different arthritis diseases. Rheumatic diseases include any condition that causes pain, stiffness, and swelling in joints, muscles, tendons, ligaments, or bones. More common in women than men, they are also often associated with old age. The most common form of arthritis, osteoarthritis, occurs more often in older adults. However, arthritis and other rheumatic diseases can affect people of all ages.

What causes Arthritis?

The cause of arthritis depends on the type of arthritis. Osteoarthritis is caused by the wear and tear of the joint over time or because of overuse. Rheumatoid arthritis is caused by the body's immune system attacking the body's own tissues. However, many other forms of arthritis are idiopathic. This means that the cause is not known.

Who is at risk for Arthritis?

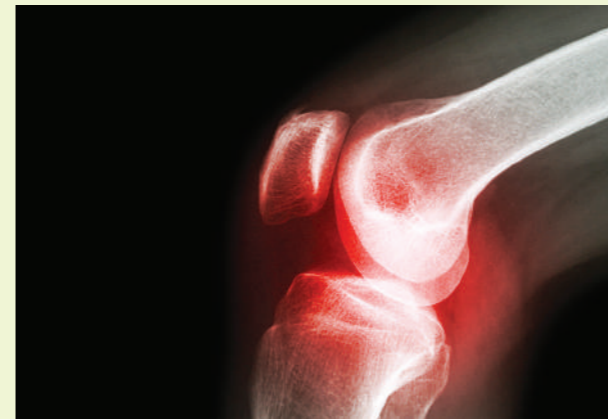
- **Age:** The older you are, the more likely you are to develop arthritis
 - **Gender:** Women are more likely to have arthritis than men
 - **Heredity:** Some types of arthritis are associated with specific genes
- Risk factors that can be avoided or changed:**
- **Weight:** Being overweight or obese can damage the knee joints
 - **Injury:** A joint that has been damaged by an injury is more likely to develop arthritis at some point

- **Infection:** Reactive arthritis can affect joints after an infection

- **Occupation:** Work that involves repetitive bending or squatting can lead to knee arthritis

What are the symptoms of Arthritis?

- Pain in one or more joints that doesn't go away or recurs
- Warmth and redness in one or more joints
- Swelling in one or more joints
- Stiffness in one or more joints
- Trouble moving one or more joints in a normal way



How is Arthritis diagnosed?

The process starts with a medical history and physical exam. Tests may also be done including blood tests such as Complete Blood Count, (CBC) Antinuclear Antibody (ANA) test, and other tests such as:

- **Joint aspiration (Arthrocentesis):** A small sample of the synovial fluid is taken from a joint and tested to see if crystals, bacteria, or viruses are present
- **X-rays or other imaging tests:** These are done to look at the extent of damage to a joint
- **Urine test:** This is done to check for protein and various kinds of blood cells
- **HLA tissue typing:** This is done to look for genetic markers of ankylosing spondylitis
- **Skin biopsy:** Tiny pieces of tissue are taken to examine under a microscope. This helps to diagnose a type of arthritis that involves the skin, such as lupus or psoriatic arthritis
- **Muscle biopsy:** Tiny pieces of tissue are taken to check under a microscope. This helps to diagnose conditions that affect muscles. These include polymyositis or vasculitis.

The symptoms of arthritis can be like other health conditions. Make sure to see your healthcare provider for a diagnosis.

What are the complications of Arthritis?

Because arthritis causes joints to degenerate overtime, it can lead to disability. It can cause pain and movement problems for a person, making him less able to carry out normal daily activities and tasks.

How is Arthritis treated?

The treatment depends on your symptoms, age and general health. It will also depend on the type of arthritis you have, and the severity of the condition. Each person requires a specific treatment plan tailored to his/her condition.

There is no cure for arthritis. The goal of the treatment is often to limit pain and inflammation, and help ensure joint function.

Short-term treatments include:

1. **Medications:** Short-term relief for pain and inflammation or other nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory medications.
2. **Heat and cold:** Pain may be eased by using moist heat (warm bath or shower) or dry heat (heating pad) on the joint. Pain and swelling may be eased with cold (ice pack wrapped in a towel) on the joint.
3. **Joint immobilization:** The use of a splint or brace can help a joint rest and protect it from further injury.

