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**Rheumatoid Arthritis**



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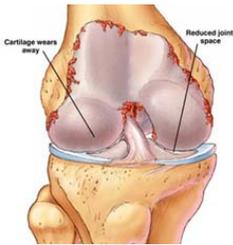
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# Understanding Rheumatoid Arthritis and Its Treatment

## Rheumatoid Arthritis

Rheumatoid arthritis (RA) is an inflammatory disease that causes pain, swelling, stiffness, and loss of function in the joints. It occurs when the immune system, which normally defends the body from invading organisms, turns its attack against the membrane lining the joints.



**Causes:** No one knows what causes rheumatoid arthritis. Genes, environment and hormones might contribute. Treatments include medicine, lifestyle changes and surgery. These can slow or stop joint damage and reduce pain and swelling.

### Treatment:

- Current treatment methods focus on relieving pain, reducing inflammation, stopping or slowing joint damage and improving your functioning and sense of well-

being. Your doctor might have only prescribed an over-the-counter pain reliever, like an analgesic or non-steroidal, anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID), until you experienced increased disease progression. Now, with the improvement of available medications, doctors know that they have to be more aggressive early on in order to prevent severe deformity and joint erosion.

The skin: They may contain benzoyl peroxide, sulfur, resorcinol, or salicylic acid. They work by killing bacteria, drying up the oil, and causing your skin to peel.

If the pimples are still a problem, a dermatologist can prescribe stronger medications and discuss other options with you.

Prescription medicines include oral antibiotics, Topical antibiotics and Synthetic vitamin A derivatives

### **Surgery:**

Many people with rheumatoid arthritis might consider surgery as part of their treatment plan. The surgical options available today can contribute greatly to improving your quality of life with RA.

**Synovectomy** – When one or two joints are affected more severely than others, this procedure is used to reduce the amount of inflammatory tissue by removing the diseased synovium or lining of the joint. It may result in less swelling and pain and the slowing or prevention of further joint damage.

**Arthroscopic Surgery** – In this

procedure, the surgeon inserts a very thin tube with a light at the end into the joint through a small incision. It is connected to a closed-circuit television and allows the surgeon to see the extent of the damage in the joint. Once there, the doctor can take tissue samples, remove loose cartilage, repair tears, smooth a rough surface or remove diseased synovial tissue. It is most commonly performed on the knee and shoulder.

**Osteotomy** – Literally meaning, “To cut bone,” this procedure is used to increase stability by redistributing the weight on the joint. Osteotomy isn’t often used with RA because there are other options available besides cutting the bones.

### **Joint Replacement Surgery or Arthroplasty**

- This is the surgical reconstruction or replacement of a joint. Successfully used to help people who otherwise might be in a wheelchair, joint replacement surgery involves the removal of the joint, resurfacing and relining of the ends of bones and replacing the joint with a man-made component. This procedure is usually recommended for people over 50 or who have severe disease progression. Typically a new joint will last between 20 and 30 years.

**Arthrodesis or fusion** – This procedure fuses two bones together. While it limits movement, it does decrease pain and increase stability of the joints in the ankles, wrists, fingers, toes and spine.

