



Osteoarthritis Versus Rheumatoid Arthritis Awareness Month

Arthritis isn't a single condition but a broad term for many conditions affecting the joints. Arthritis is typically associated with pain that impairs joint movement. It causes swelling and tenderness of one or more joints. The main symptoms are joint pain and stiffness, which can impact daily activities and work. The most common types are osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis.

Osteoarthritis happens when cartilage – the hard, slippery tissue that cushions the ends of bones at a joint - breaks down.

Rheumatoid arthritis is an autoimmune disease in which the immune system mistakenly attacks the joints, beginning with the joint lining. This leads to inflammation and tissue damage.

Another form of arthritis is gout. Gout is caused by uric acid crystals depositing in the joints due to elevated blood uric acid levels. Infections or underlying conditions, such as psoriasis or lupus, can also cause other types of arthritis.

Treatment depends on the type of arthritis, but the main goals are to relieve symptoms and improve quality of life.

Symptoms

The most common signs and symptoms of arthritis involve the joints. Depending on the type of arthritis, symptoms may include:

- ✓ Stiffness
- ✓ Swelling
- ✓ Darkening of the skin around the joint
- ✓ Decreased range of motion.

Risk Factors

- ✓ **Family History.** Some types of arthritis run in families, so you may be more likely to develop arthritis if your parents or siblings have the condition.
- ✓ **Age.** The risk of many types of arthritis – including osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, and gout – increase with age.
- ✓ **Your Sex.** Women are more likely than men to develop rheumatoid arthritis, while most of the people who have gout, another type of arthritis, are men.
- ✓ **Previous Joint Injury.** A past joint injury, such as one from sport or an accident, can increase the risk of arthritis in that joint later in life.
- ✓ **Excess Weight.** Carrying excess pounds puts added stress on joints, particularly your knees, hips, and spine. This increases the risk of developing arthritis.

A decorative border composed of various human bones, including long bones like the femur and tibia, and shorter bones like the radius and ulna, arranged in a rectangular frame around the text.

Treatment

Arthritis treatment focuses on relieving symptoms and improving joint function. Commonly used arthritis medicines include:

- ✓ **NSAIDs.** Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, also called NSAIDs can relieve pain and reduce inflammation. Examples included ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin IB, others) and naproxen sodium (Aleve). Stronger NSAIDs are available by prescription. NSAIDs you take by mouth can cause stomach irritation and may increase your risk of heart attack or stroke. They can affect liver and kidney function and need to be used with caution. NSAIDs are also available as creams or gels, which can be rubbed on joints.
- ✓ **Counterirritants.** Some creams and ointments contain menthol or capsaicin, the ingredient that makes hot peppers spicy. When applied to the skin over a painful joint, these ingredients may help block pain signals, providing temporary relief.
- ✓ **Steroids.** Corticosteroid medicines, such as prednisone, reduce inflammation and pain. And they may slow joint damage. Corticosteroids may be given as a pill or as an injection into a painful joint. Side effects may include bone thinning, weight gain, and diabetes.
- ✓ **Disease-modifying Antirheumatic Drugs, also called DMARDs.** These medicines can slow the progression of rheumatoid arthritis and alter its course. This may help prevent permanent damage to joints and other tissues. In addition to conventional DMARDs, there are also biologic agents and targeted synthetic DMARDs. Side effects vary, but most DMARDs increase your risk of infections.

Therapy

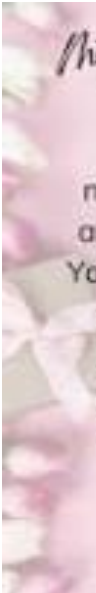
Physical therapy can be helpful for some types of arthritis. Exercises can improve the range of motion and strengthen the muscles surrounding joints. Sometimes, splints or braces may be recommended for added support and stability.

Surgery

If medicines and therapy don't help, your healthcare professional may recommend surgery. Common surgeries to treat arthritis include:

- ✓ **Joint Repair.** In some people, joint surfaces can be smoothed or aligned again to reduce pain and improve function. These procedures are often done arthroscopically, using small incisions over the joint.
- ✓ **Joint Replacement.** This procedure removes the damaged joint and replaces it with an artificial implant. The most commonly replaced joints are the hips and knees.
- ✓ **Joint Fusion.** Typically used for smaller joints, such as those in the wrist, ankle, and fingers, joint fusion removes the ends of two bones and fuses them. This allows them to heal into a single, rigid unit to relieve pain.

The Health & Wellness Ministry
Dr. Donna Pringle



Mother's Day Prayer

Dear Lord,

We thank You for the gift of mothers, for their love, guidance, and care. Please bless them with Your grace, strength, and wisdom as they continue to nurture and support their families. Surround them with Your love and peace, and let them know how deeply they are appreciated and cherished. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.