



Living with Arthritis

Arthritis can affect a single joint or multiple joints throughout your body. For many people, the pain of arthritis can make day-to-day tasks challenging. There are over 100 types of arthritis affecting millions of people and for most types there is no cure. The good news is that there are several ways to control your pain so you can lead an active life. Below you will find information on the two most common types of arthritis and what you can do to ease your pain.

Osteoarthritis

Osteoarthritis is often caused by overuse or the wearing out of a joint and commonly occurs in the knees and hips, finger, the joint at the base of the thumb and the joint at the base of the big toe, and in the spine. It is slow developing and usually appears after age 40 or 50 but severe trauma to a joint can sometimes cause this type of arthritis to rapidly develop. When cartilage deteriorates, the normally smooth surfaces roughen to the point where bone ends may touch and rub.

People with osteoarthritis may experience pain, stiffness, and occasional swelling in the joint. Flare-ups often occur following activity of the joint or may coincide with a change in weather.

Rheumatoid Arthritis

Rheumatoid arthritis (RA) is a chronic disease that develops quickly and usually begins between the ages of 25 and 50. RA is considered an autoimmune disease, meaning that your immune system attacks parts of your body—in this case your joints. When this happens, your joints may feel warm, painful, or swollen, and may become stiff. As the disease progresses, the inflamed cells release enzymes that may digest bone and cartilage. This can cause the joint to lose its shape and alignment, increase pain, and lose movement. While there is no cure for RA, early diagnosis and treatment is critical in limiting joint damage.

Treatment

If you are diagnosed with arthritis, your doctor will most likely prescribe medication. The goal is to find the lowest effective dose that has the fewest health risks. But medication is just one part of a successful treatment plan. Lifestyle changes and self-care measures may help reduce or eliminate your need for medicines.

Wellness