

## Rheumatoid Arthritis

Rheumatoid arthritis (RA) is a chronic autoimmune condition that causes swelling and pain in the lining of the joints. An autoimmune disorder is when your body's own immune system attacks the body's own tissue. RA most commonly affects the hands, wrists, and knees.

### Risk

Rheumatoid arthritis can result in bone loss and joint problems. In some people, it can even impact other areas of the body including the skin, eyes, lungs, and heart.

### Medication

There is no cure for rheumatoid arthritis, but early treatment with medication can improve symptoms and slow how quickly the disease worsens.

Some medications may take up to 6 weeks to start working and up to 3 months to see full effect. It is important to continue to take the medication regularly as prescribed. Talk with your pharmacist about ways to remember to take your medications.

### Monitoring

Your healthcare provider should perform regular monitoring to check your response to medication therapy based on clinical symptoms and lab monitoring.

### Other things you can do

Leading a healthy, active lifestyle is important in managing RA symptoms. It may be helpful to see a physical therapist to help determine what types of exercise are best for you.

Some medication used to treat RA can weaken the immune system. It is important to let any health care provider know you are taking this type of medication. Some vaccines may not be recommended if your immune system is weakened so it is important to talk with your health care provider about what vaccines you should and should not get while on RA treatment.

### Resources

1. Mayo Clinic. Rheumatoid Arthritis. <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/rheumatoid-arthritis/symptoms-causes/syc-20353648>
2. Rheumatoid Arthritis Support Network. <https://www.rheumatoidarthritis.org/>