

Rheumatoid arthritis

What is Rheumatoid Arthritis (RA)?

RA is an auto-immune condition which causes pain and inflammation in the joints. An auto-immune disorder involves the immune system attacking the body. In the case of RA, the immune system targets the lining of the joints. The condition usually affects the hands and feet, but can affect the bigger joints such as the hips and knees.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms vary between people. Common symptoms include joint pain, swelling, tenderness, stiffness particularly in the morning and is usually symmetrical (both left and right are affected of the joints involved).

What causes RA?

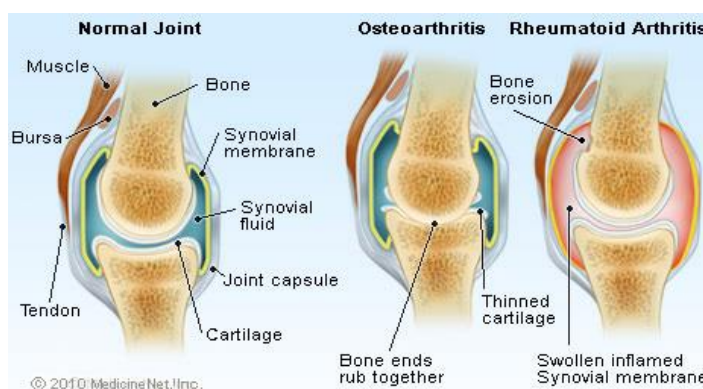
The causes are unknown, however it is more common in people who smoke and have a family history of the condition.

How is it diagnosed?

A blood test can often help with the diagnosis of RA. Often you will be referred to see a rheumatologist to confirm the diagnosis.

What does treatment involve?

There is no cure for RA, so managing the condition appropriately is very important. Often you will be prescribed medication from your rheumatologist. Physiotherapy can help manage RA by loosening the muscles and joints to help alleviate that stiffness experienced. Physio will also aim to strengthen the muscles around the affected joints, therefore unloading the joint as much as possible.



Normal and Arthritic Joints