



Understanding ARTHRITIS

Arthritis means joint inflammation. It has many causes and there are different types.

The 2 main types of arthritis are:

- **Osteoarthritis:** Also known as OA, this is the most common type of arthritis. This condition starts with damage to the cartilage. Cartilage is a flexible tissue that covers the ends of the bones in a joint and protects bones from wear and tear.

OA typically affects major weight-bearing joints including the knee, the hip, the spine, and the hand. Over time, the cartilage breaks down, leaving bone to rub against bone. The condition may be caused by wear and tear, aging, an old injury, or a combination of all of these. It is marked by:

- > Dull, aching pain
- > Swelling, redness, and warmth
- > Stiffness
- > Symptoms that are worse in the morning or after movement

- > Loss of range of motion or function
- > Pain that may become constant

- **Rheumatoid arthritis:** This is an autoimmune disease that affects the joints and the whole body. With this disease, the body's immune system attacks the lining around the joints. This inflames and thickens the lining. Over time, this can damage bone and soft tissue and cause abnormally shaped joints. The disease is marked by:

- > Warm, tender, swollen joints
- > Symptoms that tend to start in the small joints of the hands and feet
- > Bilateral symptoms (both sides of the body affected)
- > Symptoms that progress to the larger joints, like knees, hips, and elbows (if untreated)

- > Extreme fatigue and, possibly, fevers
- > Inflammation and scarring of lung tissue (advanced stages of the disease)

If you have joint pain and are concerned you may have arthritis, be sure to talk to your doctor. This is especially important if your pain and symptoms have gone on for more than a couple of weeks.

Ask your health care practitioner if there are any tests, referrals, or treatments that might be helpful to use along with your current treatment plan. Other treatment options may include the following: chiropractic services, physical therapy, acupuncture, massage therapy, nutritional services, medicines, naturopathic services, and other services (such as occupational therapy).