

# ARTHRITIS

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## WHAT IS ARTHRITIS?

There are more than 100 different types of arthritis and related conditions. Causes for most types are unknown. Each type of arthritis has different symptoms and treatments. There are two primary categories of arthritis:

**Inflammatory arthritis** may affect joints, skin, kidneys, and other parts of the body. Some common types are Rheumatoid Arthritis, Systemic Lupus Erythematosus, Ankylosing Spondylitis, Scleroderma, and Juvenile Arthritis.

**Degenerative arthritis**, also more commonly referred to as **osteoarthritis**. This form of arthritis may also be referred to as wear and tear arthritis.

Another category would be listed as syndromes such as Fibromyalgia.

## HOW IS ARTHRITIS DIAGNOSED?

There is no single test to diagnosis arthritis. The actual diagnosis may take several visits. Certain tests may support the diagnosis and may include:

- lab tests,
- x-rays,
- urine tests,
- blood tests, and
- tissue samples.

It is important to identify arthritis and begin treatment as early as possible. By taking medications and/or practicing joint protection can reduce the crippling effects that arthritis may cause. Early diagnosis gives you a better chance of dealing properly with the disease.



**Arthritis**



## MANAGING ARTHRITIS

Currently there is no known cure for most forms of arthritis. But, there are many ways to manage or control the disease, slow its course of destruction, and, if you have disability, to reduce it. A physician can help control the symptoms of arthritis by prescribing medications that will help ease pain and slow joint damage. Physical therapy and exercise will help improve your range of motion, keep your joints flexible, and strengthen your muscles. Self-help techniques, such as relaxation exercises and participation in pain management support groups, can also help control or alleviate arthritis-related pain, fatigue, and emotional distress. You and your doctor can work together to find the best treatment for you. With the right treatment program, most people with arthritis lead active lives.

### WARNING SIGNS OF ARTHRITIS

If you have any of these warning signs in or around a joint for more than two weeks, see your doctor.

- Pain
- Swelling
- Stiffness
- Problems moving one or more joints