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## Rheumatoid Arthritis Overview

RA is an inflammatory form of arthritis that causes joint pain and damage. RA attacks the lining of your joints (synovium) causing swelling that can result in aching and throbbing and eventually deformity.

2 or 3 times more common in women than men and it generally occurs between the ages of 40 and 60.

### Signs & Symptoms

Joint pain

Joint Swelling

Joints that are tender to the touch

Red and puffy hands

Firm bumps of tissue under the skin on your arms (rheumatoid nodules)

Fatigue

Morning stiffness that lasts at least 30 minutes

Fever

Weight gain

Smaller joints are usually the first areas to be affected. Ex. Wrists, hands, ankles and feet. Later, as the disease progresses your shoulders, elbows, knees, hips and jaw can also become involved.

RA occurs when WBC – whose usual job is to attack unwanted invaders, such as bacteria and viruses – move from your bloodstream into the membranes that surround your joints. The blood cells appear to play a role in causing the synovium to become inflamed. The inflammation causes the release of proteins that, over months or years cause the synovium to thicken. The proteins can also damage the cartilage, bone. Tendons and ligaments near your joint. Gradually, the joint loses its shape and alignment and eventually, it may be destroyed.