

## Rheumatoid Arthritis and Inflammation

Rheumatoid arthritis, also known as RA, is an inflammatory disease that attacks the joints, tissues and organs of the body. Inflammation is most commonly noted in the joints of the hands and legs, but inflammation of the lungs, heart and skin are also noted. Only 1% of the world's population is recognized as having rheumatoid arthritis and the condition is most common in people between the ages of 40 and 50.

What are the symptoms of rheumatoid arthritis?

During the initial stages of the disease process, inflammation of the joints in the hands, feet and cervical spine are most common. Over time, this inflammation can lead to synovitis. Synovitis is an inflammation of the membranes that surround the joints. When the synovial lining deteriorates, the joints can become deformed and loss of function may occur.

The skin can be affected by rheumatoid arthritis as well. Small nodules may form around the joints due to the disease process. These nodules can contain lymphocytes and plasma cells. Other skin conditions that may be associated with rheumatoid arthritis include Sweet's syndrome, thinning of the skin and skin fragility.

Inner organs may also be affected by rheumatoid arthritis. Fibrosis of the lungs, plural effusions in the lungs, renal amyloidosis in the kidneys, arteriosclerosis and myocardial infarction are all associated with the disease.

How is rheumatoid arthritis diagnosed?

X-rays and magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) are the most common tests used to diagnose rheumatoid arthritis. Other tests can be included to verify the diagnosis such as blood tests which can differentiate between rheumatoid and other forms of arthritis. The American College of Rheumatology has set a list of guidelines to be used when diagnosing this form of arthritis. The diagnostic criteria may include:

Morning stiffness lasting more than one hour and continuing for six weeks or more.

Swelling of the soft tissues for six weeks or more.

Nodules being present on bony prominences for six weeks or more.

Joint erosion as determined by X-Ray or MRI.

If the criteria listed are not met, the diagnosis of rheumatoid arthritis may be changed to another form of arthritis.

How is rheumatoid arthritis treated?

There are no known cures for rheumatoid arthritis, thus the treatments focus on relieving the pain associated with the inflammation of the joints and tissues. Treatment also promotes a reduction in the deterioration of the joint tissues in order to slow the disease process.

The most common medications given for rheumatoid arthritis include cortisone and anti-rheumatic medications. Anti-inflammatory medications may also be prescribed to reduce the pain and deterioration associated with the disease process.

Joint replacement surgery may be required in the latter stages of the disease. The knee is the most commonly replaced joint. Replacing the joint does not stop the disease process, but the new joint offers an improvement on functionality and pain reduction.

Are alternative treatments available?

Yes, there are alternative solutions to ease the pain associated with inflammation. Foods rich in omega 3s are known to reduce swelling and thus reduce the pain and joint stiffness common with arthritis. Radon therapy, medicinal marijuana and acupuncture are also commonly used.

Check out the Resource box for more info.

## About the Author

Jason Cadwell is a successful representative for Sonoran Bloom Noplaea, the Anti-Inflammatory Drink. Take the Nopalea Challenge and Get A FREE Bottle to try. Get more info on the product at <http://www.nopaleasuperfruit.info>