

Arthritis

What is Arthritis?

- Pain and swelling of any joint is known as arthritis. Joint pain is not always due to arthritis.

Is arthritis a name of disease?

- No. Arthritis is symptom. For example fever is symptom and there are many causes for fever like malaria, typhoid, tuberculosis etc. Similarly arthritis can occur due to many different reasons.

Why arthritis occurs?

- Science does not know the reason for many types arthritis. Genetics and environmental factors play role in development of arthritis. Bacteria, virus, cancer etc play role as environmental factors.

How many types of arthritis are known?

- There are more than 100 types of arthritis. Type of arthritis should be determined to give appropriate medicines.

What is presentation of patient with arthritis?

- Joint pain and swelling is important symptoms of arthritis. Some patients initially present only with joint pain and swelling appears later. Which and how many joints are involved is helpful in deciding type of arthritis.
- Patient feels stiffness. Low grade fever, loss of appetite and weight loss are other associated symptoms. Joint damage, destruction and deformities occur in absence of adequate therapy. Arthritis of spine joints leads to bending of spine.

Does arthritis affect other organs of body?

- Yes. Arthritis can affect other organs of body like heart, lung, kidney, brain, muscle etc. These organs can get permanent damage if effective treatment not started at right time.
- SLE, Scleroderma, Rheumatoid Arthritis, Polymyositis, Vasculitis, etc are examples of these types of arthritis.

How blood investigations and x-ray help in diagnosis of arthritis?

- Arthritis is diagnosed based on patient's symptoms and examination by trained doctors. Blood investigations and x-ray help in diagnosis and determining subtype of arthritis.
- Blood counts, liver function test, kidney function test are done regularly to monitor therapy. Even other imaging study may be utilized to evaluate involvement of other organs by disease process.

What is treatment for arthritis?

- Arthritis is treated with medicines which reduce pain and medicines which control the disease (disease modifying anti rheumatic drugs -DMARD).
- Some patient also requires vitamin and calcium supplements.

Are all types of arthritis treated by same medications?

- No. Drugs are prescribed according to type of arthritis. Patient's age, severity of the disease and other associated diseases are taken into consideration while deciding treatment.

How much time is needed for control of arthritis?

- Usually pain and swelling reduces earlier within few days. Disease control takes more time (6 to 12 weeks). All the patients do not respond to same medicines. Many patients require combination of drugs.

Can arthritis be cured?

- Arthritis can be controlled just like blood pressure and diabetes. There are no specified courses. Once arthritis is under control then gradually dosages are reduced.
- In some patients disease goes into natural remission and then drugs can be stopped. Serious arthritis requires lifelong treatment.

Does long term treatment lead to side effects?

- Usually appropriate medications in appropriate doses does not create any problem. To monitor side effects doctor advises regular blood tests and follow up.

What is relation between food and arthritis?

- There are very few arthritis like gout where food is associated with arthritis. Each patient should take food according to their local tradition.
- Milk, curd, buttermilk etc are good source of calcium and helpful for bone strengthening.