



# ARTHRITIS

Pain, swelling and stiffness in the joints

## OSTEOARTHRITIS

Osteoarthritis occurs when the bones in the joints rub together due to the disintegration or wear-and-tear of the cartilage cushioning them. This condition affects the joints in the feet, hips, fingers, knees, and the spine, and most commonly occurs in middle-aged to older persons. Frequent bouts of gout, history of joint injuries and overuse of joints are also a precursor of the disease. Other causes include hereditary factors, obesity and metabolic disorders such as hemochromatosis.

### Symptoms:

- Pain or stiffness after inactivity that gradually abates after 30 to 60 minutes
- Bony bumps that appear at the ends or on the middle joints of the fingers
- Joint pain and occasional swelling
- A cracking noise or grinding sensation during movement

### DO:

- Maintain ideal weight. Develop muscle strength.
- Seek professional treatment.
- Try exercises that minimize the strain on the joints like yoga, tai chi, or swimming.
- Take warm baths to ease pain.
- Apply heat to stiff or painful joints to soothe pain.
- Try these simple movements: gently swinging each arm or leg forward and backward or pressing the palms together with the fingers of each hand pointing in opposite directions.

### DON'T:

- Do not engage in activities that employ a limited but repetitive range of motion.
- Don't abuse your joints.
- Refrain from running, especially on hard surfaces.

## RHEUMATOID ARTHRITIS

The origins of rheumatoid arthritis are unknown although some theorize it is caused by viruses and genetics.

### Symptoms:

- A decrease in mobility
- Feeling tired and achy all the time
- Pain, swelling, restricted motion, and a feeling of warmth around the affected joints
- Painless bulges underneath the skin, especially around the elbows
- Stiffness after a period of idleness that lasts more than an hour known as "gelling"
- Weight loss

### DO:

- Seek professional treatment.
- Try exercises (with the approval of your physician) that minimize the strain on the joints like isometrics (which involve a lot of muscle-flexing but virtually no joint work), swimming, and stretching.
- Maintain a healthy diet.
- Seek help from occupational or physical therapists for the improvement of the said condition.

### DON'T:

- Don't lead a sedentary lifestyle.
- Don't smoke. Substances found in tobacco makes this situation worse.

*Professional help is needed for Juvenile Rheumatoid Arthritis. A doctor can help you formulate a plan for your child to cope with this condition.*



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## JUVENILE RHEUMATOID ARTHRITIS

The causes of juvenile rheumatoid arthritis, an autoimmune disease that children may outgrow, are unknown.

### Symptoms:

- Unrelenting swelling of the joints
- Feeling tired and achy all the time
- Limping, accompanied with fever, especially in the morning

### DO:

- Seek professional treatment to formulate a plan to cope with the said condition
- Join a support group to share information and feeling. Interaction with other sufferers provides emotional relief.
- Keep updated on the developments of treatment by reading medical journals and surfing the Internet for information.

### DON'T:

- For parents: don't prevent children from expressing emotions like anger, discouragement or frustration.



# ASTHMA

Chronic inflammation of the bronchial tubes that restricts airflow into and out of the lungs

Asthma occurs when the bronchial tubes become inflamed or there is an overproduction of mucous. It also leads to the tightening of the muscles of the air passages, restricting airflow and causing labored breathing. Triggers of this condition include allergens (dust mites, pollen, molds, and pet hair or flakes of skin shedding), tobacco or wood smoke, fumes, poor air circulation, strong smells, and certain weather conditions such as cold air or extreme winds. They also include viral or sinus infections such as colds, flu or pneumonia. Allergic reactions from certain food or medicine, even exercise and physical activity may sometimes cause an asthma attack.

### Symptoms:

- Tightening of the chest
- Wheezing (or a whistling sound) when exhaling
- Shortness of breath
- Coughing, sometimes with sputum (phlegm & saliva)
- Restlessness and difficulty falling and staying asleep

### DO:

- Identify and eliminate triggers.
- Change air conditioning filters.
- Use air-tight mattresses and pillow cases. To get rid of dust mites, wash bedding weekly.
- If asthma attacks occur after physical activity such as exercising, take proper prescribed medication.
- Use a peak flow meter to monitor breathing progress.
- Use a dehumidifier.
- Wear a medical I.D. bracelet as a precautionary measure in case of extreme attacks to alert others.

### DON'T:

- Don't use strong perfume.
- Don't use cleaning supplies with strong odors.
- Don't smoke and stay away from smokers.
- Don't go near wood stoves and wood fireplaces.