

## Arthritis

Arthritis is not a single disease, in fact it is an umbrella term for more than 100 conditions. The most common form of arthritis is called **1)** \_\_\_\_\_. It is sometimes called degenerative **2)** \_\_\_\_\_ disease.

It used to be thought of as a normal part of **3)** \_\_\_\_\_ where the joints degenerate in the wear and tear of life. However, we now realize that osteoarthritis results from a number of **4)** \_\_\_\_\_ including inflammation, mechanical stress on the joints and genetics.

Osteoarthritis typically involves pain and inflammation in the joints. Over time it can lead to joint weakness and physical **5)** \_\_\_\_\_ which can interfere even with the most basic daily activities like walking, typing or cutting food.

In healthy moving joints, the ends of bones are protected by **6)** \_\_\_\_\_, a tough smooth tissue that cushions the ends and allows them to glide smoothly against one another. The whole joint is surrounded by fluid that lubricates and delivers nutrients to the cartilage. This is called **7)** \_\_\_\_\_ fluid. Osteoarthritis develops when cartilage **8)** \_\_\_\_\_ or wears away and bony ends are left unprotected. The bones then **9)** \_\_\_\_\_ together upon moving and cause pain and inflammation.

The edges of the joints may also develop new bony outgrowths called bone **10)** \_\_\_\_\_. The ligaments which are the connective tissue connecting bones to other bones may thicken too, limiting movement. The pain is usually **11)** \_\_\_\_\_ and may get worse over time.

One of the most severe types of arthritis is called rheumatoid arthritis and it does not just **12)** \_\_\_\_\_ your joints. Your whole body can suffer from it (including muscles, ligaments and organs) and in the worst cases your joints stop working.

Rheumatoid arthritis is not caused by wear and tear of life, it is actually an **13)** \_\_\_\_\_ disease. It happens when your own immune system attacks healthy parts of the body like your joints causing pain and swelling. When rheumatoid arthritis strikes, cells from your immune system attack the lining of the joint called the synovium. That attack causes the lining to become **14)** \_\_\_\_\_. If the joint loses its shape, it may become painful and difficult to move. For some people it may come and go – these periods of pain are called **15)** \_\_\_\_\_.

This is not a rare disease and we do not yet know why the immune system causes rheumatoid arthritis. But we know that certain factors can put you at a higher risk. Women are **16)** \_\_\_\_\_ than men to develop it and the risk is higher for women who have never been pregnant or who have just recently delivered a baby. It typically develops in people of 40 – 60 years of age but can happen any time. Bad habits of smokers can also increase the risk and if you have a family history of rheumatoid arthritis, you are also at higher risk. It just increases the risk but it is not a guarantee since rheumatoid arthritis is not **17)** \_\_\_\_\_.

Rheumatoid arthritis can be frustrating – it is not curable but it can be **18)** \_\_\_\_\_.