

The aches of arthritis

Feeling pain and stiffness in your joints? Wonder if it's because you're aging? Many people experience joint pain when they're 45 to 50. It's generally from arthritis—one of the most common diseases. “Arthr” means joint, and “itis” means inflammation.



There are more than 100 types of arthritis. The most common is osteoarthritis (wear and tear on joints in the fingers, knees, and hips). And, yes, osteoarthritis can develop years after an injury to a joint.

Rheumatoid arthritis can affect your whole body. It arises when your immune system mistakenly attacks your own joints bringing pain, swelling, stiffness, and loss of function.

Arthritis can damage not only your joints but also internal organs and skin. Talk with your doctor about what you can do.

SELF-CARE

- Try to stay at a healthy weight that's normal for your height. Losing as little as 10 to 12 pounds for people who are overweight can reduce stress on joints, particularly hips and knees.
- Exercise. A trained health professional can show you how to move more easily if you have arthritis without putting too much stress on joints, like the hips and knees. Activities such as walking, bicycling, and swimming are generally easy on the joints.
- If you had a severe injury to a joint, protect it from getting injured again. Actions may include wearing protective equipment, and avoiding repetitive motion joint damage.
- Don't smoke. People who smoke are more likely to get rheumatoid arthritis, and their symptoms tend to be worse.
- Take your medicines when and how you are supposed to. They can help reduce pain and stiffness.
- Try taking a warm shower in the morning.