To Learn More…

National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases (NIAMS)
National Institutes of Health
301-495-4484 or 877-22-NIAMS (226-4267)
www.niams.nih.gov

Take Time To Care

FDA Office of Women's Health

www.fda.gov/womens

Arthritis (Osteoarthritis)

Arthritis is a disease of the joints. Painful, stiff joints are the most common signs of arthritis. Other signs are swelling, warmth, and redness in the joints. People often have trouble moving the joints normally.

Arthritis is a problem for many adults age 65 and older. About 42 million Americans have some form of arthritis. It can affect people of all ages and races.

Why do people get arthritis?

- They put stress on the joints over time.
- They are overweight.
- It runs in their family.
- They are women. Women are affected 2-3 times more often than men.

How can the doctor tell if I have arthritis?

This can be tricky. Other diseases can have the same signs. The doctor will:

- Ask about your health history.
- Do an exam and look at your joints.
- Order lab tests of blood or urine samples.
- Order x-rays or other tests to see inside the joints.

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Questions the doctor might ask

- Is the pain in one or more joints?
- When do you have the pain?
- How long does the pain last?
- What were you doing when you first had the pain?
- Does moving around make the pain better or worse?
- Have you been sick or had any accidents?
- Has anyone in your family had arthritis?
- What drugs are you taking?
- Does anything make it better?

What are the treatments?

- Rest
- Exercise
- Healthy diet
- Weight loss
- Medicines
- Heat and cold
- Learning how to relax deeply
- Canes, splints, or other items to take stress off the joint
- Injections
- Surgery

What can I do to help my doctor help me?

- Help plan your treatment.
- Ask questions.
- Understand your treatment plan.
- Follow directions for taking your medicine.