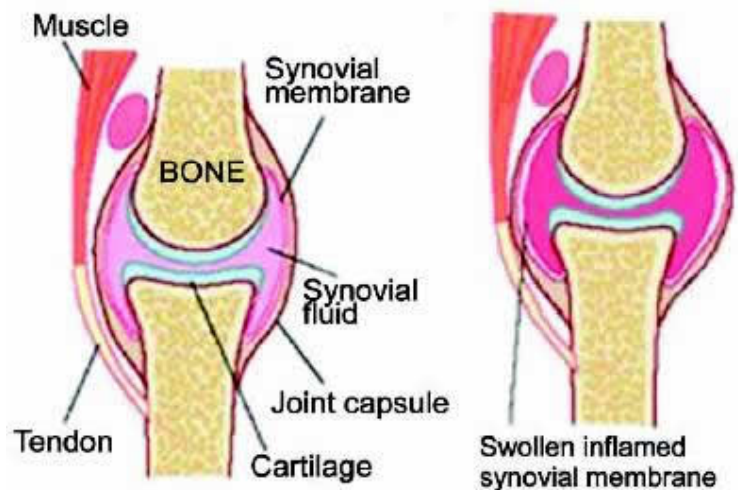


### Are You Suffering From Rheumatoid Arthritis?

Rheumatoid Arthritis (RA) is a systemic autoimmune disorder effecting the joints. Autoimmune diseases are illnesses which occur when the body tissues are mistakenly attacked by its own immune system. The severity of the joint disease may fluctuate over time but the most common outcome is progressive development of joint dysfunction, deformity and disability



RA affects 1-2% of the adult population in every part of the world. RA affects more than 2 million Americans. RA increases with age for both men and women. Peak onset is 20-45 years of age. Prevalence is higher in women. More than 75% of people with RA are women. The cause of RA is unknown.

#### *How does Rheumatoid Arthritis affect the body?*

Joint inflammation begins in the synovium (a thin layer of tissue which lines the joint) which eventually can lead to cartilage destruction. The cartilage damage results in narrowing of the joint space then joint and bone damage. Synovitis (inflammation of the synovium) is potentially reversible and is often dealt with medication. Synovitis results in warm, swollen, inflamed joints. The joints most often affected are the knee, wrist and finger joints. Structural damage following the synovitis results in cartilage loss and erosion of bone. Remission usually occurs in the first two years of the disease

#### *What are the signs and symptoms of the Rheumatoid Arthritis?*

According to the American College of Rheumatology, four of the seven symptoms indicate a diagnosis of RA.

1. Morning stiffness lasting more than 1 hour, present daily for more than 6 weeks.
2. Arthritis of 3 joints lasting for at least 6 weeks.
3. Arthritis of hand joints lasting for at least 6 weeks.
4. Symmetric arthritis lasting for at least 6 weeks.
5. Rheumatoid nodules.
6. Positive Rheumatoid Factor on blood tests.
7. Joint changes on x-ray.



The information on this page is provided to you from Performance Physical Therapy. It is not intended to replace any information/treatment provided to you by your health care provider. If you experience any pain while participating in this exercise, please contact your health care provider. Please feel free to check with your Physical Therapist if you have any questions about the information provided on this page.

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