

Rheumatoid Arthritis vs. Osteoarthritis

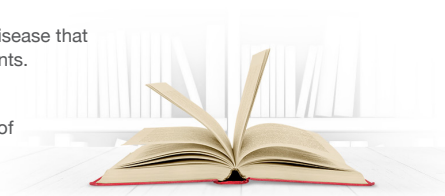
The first step in finding relief from joint pain and stiffness is working with your doctor to determine if you could be suffering from certain types of arthritis, such as rheumatoid arthritis (RA) or osteoarthritis (OA). The sooner you know, the sooner you can begin treatment and find relief from your symptoms.

We've put together a quick guide to help you understand the differences between RA and OA. While RA and OA can both lead to joint pain and stiffness, there are important differences that can help you have a conversation with your doctor to assist in identifying which type of arthritis you might have—and ultimately—how to treat it. Use the chart below to learn more about RA and OA.

What is it?

RA Autoimmune disease that impacts the joints.

OA Wear and tear of the joints.



How are joints affected?

RA The body's own immune system attacks joint tissue, causing inflammation, joint pain, stiffness, and swelling.

OA Joint cartilage breaks down over time, causing joint pain, stiffness, and swelling.



Are men or women more commonly affected?

RA Two to three times more common in women.

OA More common in men before age 45. More common in women after age 45.



At what age do symptoms begin?

RA Can occur at any age, but most often begins in middle-age.

OA Most often begins in middle-age and becomes more common with age, but younger people can get it due to joint injuries.



How long can joint pain and stiffness last after waking in the morning?

RA Can last for over 30 minutes after waking.

OA Often fades within 30 minutes of waking.



Are the same joints on both sides of the body affected in the same way?

RA Yes, can cause a symmetrical pattern of inflammation.

OA Not necessarily—individual joints can be affected and to varying degrees.



Does it cause symptoms unrelated to joint pain and stiffness?

RA Yes, may cause fever, fatigue, and general discomfort.

OA No, generally impacts only the joints.



Does it affect the skin?

RA Yes, may cause skin near affected joints to turn red and feel warm.

OA No, skin is unaffected.

