Rheumatoid Arthritis

Rheumatoid arthritis is a *chronic* (longstanding) inflammatory disease. It happens mainly in the large joints. It can affect the entire body. How it will affect each person is impossible to predict. It ranges from complete recovery to marked disability.

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- Get adequate rest.
- Eat a well balanced diet.
- Use a multi-vitamin supplement daily.
- Use heat on affected joints when you wake up.
- Use heat on affected joints before activities.
- Use ice following activities or exercising.
- Discontinue heat or ice or both if arthritis is aggravated by this treatment..
- Take all medicine with food in the stomach. Anti-inflammatory medicines tend to cause stomach inflammation and sores.
- Use splints as your caregiver prescribes. Splints help maintain joint position and function.
- Only take over-the-counter or prescription medicines for pain, discomfort, and or fever, as directed by your caregiver. Ibuprofen and aspirin lessen inflammation. Acetaminophen does not lessen inflammation.
- Do not sleep with pillows under your knees. This may lead to spasms.

GET HELP RIGHT AWAY IF:

- You have fainting episodes. You have periods of extreme weakness. Rheumatoid arthritis is associated with *anemia* (low red blood cells) and anti-arthritic drugs may cause slow gastrointestinal blood loss.
- A hot, painful joint develops rapidly and behaves more severely than usual joint aches.
- Chills and/or an oral temperature above 102° F (38.9° C) develops, or as your caregiver suggests. It lasts for 2 days or longer, not controlled by medications.

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