Arthritis - Rheumatoid

You have rheumatoid arthritis. This is arthritis caused by problems with the immune system. Symptoms may include swelling, pain, tenderness and heat around the affected joints. The hands, feet, and knees are most often involved. The pain may move from joint to joint. Other symptoms such as fever, weight loss, tiredness, and anemia may also occur. **There is no cure. Most people get along well with treatment.** A few patients have severe joint damage and disability.

Only take over-the-counter or prescription medicines for pain or discomfort as directed by your caregiver. More powerful drugs such as cortisone and narcotics may be prescribed when symptoms are severe. Heat and other physical therapies are usually helpful. There are new medications that treat the underlying immune system problem. These are prescribed by specialists. You should be as active as possible, but extra rest is needed if the arthritis flares up. **Hot painful joints sometimes need temporary splinting.** To assure proper long-term treatment, see your doctor or a joint specialist or rheumatologist.

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