

## Review Article

### Rheumatoid Arthritis and Homoeopathy

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#### ABSTRACT

Rheumatoid arthritis (RA) is a chronic, inflammatory, systemic autoimmune disease, affecting the joints with varying severity among patients. The risk factors include age, gender, genetics, and environmental exposure (cigarette smoking, air pollutants, and occupational). Many complications can follow, such as permanent joint damage requiring arthroplasty, rheumatoid vasculitis, and Felty syndrome requiring splenectomy if it remains unaddressed. As there is no cure for RA, the treatment goals are to reduce the pain and stop/slow further damage. Rheumatoid arthritis not only affects the joints but can also affect internal organs, thus causing permanent disability in many instances. Currently, there is no cure for this autoimmune disease, rather, symptoms are addressed on an individual basis.

**Keywords:** Rheumatoid arthritis, Homoeopathy, treatment



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#### INTRODUCTION

Rheumatoid arthritis is a chronic, symmetrical, inflammatory autoimmune disease that initially affects small joints, progressing to larger joints, and eventually the skin, eyes, heart, kidneys, and lungs. Often, the bone and cartilage of joints are destroyed, and tendons and ligaments weaken. All this damage to the joints causes deformities and bone erosion, usually very painful for a patient. Common symptoms of RA include morning stiffness of the affected joints for > 30 min, fatigue, fever, weight loss, joints that are tender, swollen, and warm, and rheumatoid nodules under the skin. The onset of this disease is usually from the age of 35 to 60 years, with remission and exacerbation. It can also afflict young children even before the age of 16 years, referred to as juvenile RA (JRA).

#### Causes

Factors that may increase your risk of rheumatoid arthritis include:

**Your sex.** Women are more likely than men to develop rheumatoid arthritis.

**Age.** Rheumatoid arthritis can occur at any age, but it most commonly begins in middle age.

**Family history.** If a member of your family has rheumatoid arthritis, you may have an increased risk of the disease.

**Smoking.** Cigarette smoking increases your risk of developing rheumatoid arthritis, particularly if you have a genetic predisposition for developing the disease. Smoking also appears to be associated with greater disease severity.

**Excess weight.** People who are overweight appear to be at a somewhat higher risk of developing rheumatoid arthritis.

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### **Symptoms**

#### **Stage I: Synovitis**

During stage I, you may start having mild symptoms, including joint pain and joint stiffness. Most commonly, this affects the hands and fingers, as well as the ankles and knees. The immune system has begun attacking the joint tissue, causing the synovial membrane to swell, and become inflamed.

#### **Stage II: Pannus**

In stage II of rheumatoid arthritis, the continued inflammation has led to a thinning of the cartilage. Normally, cartilage helps provide some cushion for the bones and makes joint motion more fluid. Without all that cushion, joint pain and stiffness may worsen. This also sets the stage for joint damage. Without the protection of cartilage, the bones may begin to erode at the joint.

#### **Stage III: Fibrous Ankylosis**

*Ankylosis* is a term for when bones start to fuse together at a joint, causing unusual lack of mobility. In stage III, the damaged joint area starts to fuse with a connective fibrous tissue. This will severely limit your range of motion, which may make simple tasks even more difficult. At this point, your joints may start to appear bent and crooked.

#### **Stage IV: Bony Ankylosis**

As the name suggests, stage IV is when the bones fuse together with actual bone tissue instead of just a connective fibrous tissue. At this stage, pain goes away, but so does the ability to move. The joint is essentially gone, so you cannot bend or flex the area. Once someone has stage IV rheumatoid arthritis, they may have trouble doing the tasks and hobbies that they normally would.

### **Investigations**

Investigations for Rheumatoid Arthritis

The blood test done in cases suspected of rheumatoid arthritis are rheumatoid factor,

Anti – cyclic citrullinated peptide (anti – CCP), ESR and c – reactive protein (CRP)

. Other tests include X-Ray and MRI of affected joints which are done to rule out the severity of the disease.

### **What are its types?**

**Seropositive:** In this type persons with rheumatoid arthritis have their blood tests positive for rheumatoid factor or anti – CCPs.

**Seronegative:** A person may develop Rheumatoid arthritis even in the absence of rheumatoid factor or anti – CCPs. This is termed as seronegative type rheumatoid arthritis. In this type of the blood tests are negative for RF and anti – CCPs. In such cases diagnosis is done based on clinical symptoms and X- rays. This type is usually milder than the seropositive type.

**Juvenile rheumatoid arthritis:** Juvenile rheumatoid arthritis is when rheumatoid arthritis affects children younger than 17 yrs of age. It is also known as juvenile idiopathic arthritis (JIA).

**Palindromic rheumatism-:** In these recurrent attacks of pain, swelling appears in one or more joints all sudden. It last for few hours or few days. In between the flare up attacks the pain and swelling subsides completely. It is not a type of rheumatoid arthritis but people having palindromic rheumatism have chance to develop rheumatoid arthritis.

### **Homoeopathic treatment**

Rheumatoid arthritis can be treated naturally with homeopathic medicines. These medicines help to reduce inflammation of the joints by moderating the immune system. They also help to slow down further progression of the disease. The pain, swelling and stiffness in the joints are also relieved wonderfully with them. The joint damage and joint deformity though cannot be cured but can be symptomatically managed with homeopathic medicines. These medicines are of natural origin thus are safe to use among people of all age groups.

**Rhus Tox –** To relieve stiffness and pain in joints Rhus Tox helps to relieve joint pains and stiffness by reducing the joint inflammation. Persons needing it mainly have joint stiffness worse in the morning and after a period of inactivity. Warm applications and motion of affected joint helps to relieve their symptoms. Massaging the joint also offer relief in them.

**Apis Mellifica –** For reducing swelling in joints Apis Mellifica is a well indicated medicine for cases where joint is highly swollen. Along with this the joint is red and inflamed. Joint pains which are mainly burning, stinging type are also well treated with Apis. Joint is also sensitive to touch.

**Bryonia –** For red, hot, swollen joints

Bryonia is helpful for cases where joints are red, hot and swollen. With this there is pain in joints. The pains are sharp, stitching type. The pain gets

worse by motion and better with rest. Warmth may relieve the pains. It is Indicated when mostly knee and elbow joints are involved.

Antimonium Crudum – To reduce pain in finger joints. It is beneficial to treat pain in finger joints and reduce its inflammation. Persons needing it mainly have worsening of pain from cold. They find relief by warm applications. Drawing sensation in the fingers may also be felt.

Actaea Spicata – For wrist pain and swelling.

Actaea Spicata is mainly given for cases where wrist pain and swelling are present. Wrist is also red with heat. The pain is worse from motion. It is also indicated to treat pain and swelling in other small joints of fingers, toes and ankle.

Caulophyllum – For small joints

Caulophyllum is also used for treating arthritis that affect small joints. The small joints are painful and stiff in cases needing it. The joints of fingers, toes, ankle, and wrist are affected in such cases. The pains keep on shifting in minutes from one joint to other. In some case nodes are present on finger joints.

Arnica – For markedly tender joints

Arnica is majorly used when the joints are extremely tender. Person has great fear of touching the affected joint due to pain and tenderness. The knee also has sore, bruised pain along with intense swelling.

Stellaria Media – for pains in almost all the joints  
Stellaria Media is indicated for cases where for pains is felt in almost all the joints. The joints are sore to touch. Stiffness is also there in the joints. Sometimes the pain shifts from one joint to another.

Ledum Pal – For painful, swollen ankles

Ledum Pal offers great help in reducing pain and swelling in the ankles.

Persons needing it have worsening of ankle pain from movement. They find relief in it by cold applications. They may have ascending rheumatism where pain start from feet joints and then ascend to joints above it in the leg.

Calcarea Carb For pain and swelling in knee joint It is an Important medicine to manage pain and swelling in the knee joint. The pains are drawing, tearing in nature. The knee is swollen mostly at nighttime. It is also hot and tenderness to touch.

Colchicum – For pain that worsens from touch.

Persons having joint pain that worsens from touch are highly benefited with this medicine. Along with this they have heat and stiffness in the joints. The joints mainly involved where it is indicated are wrist, ankle, finger sand toes. Most times the pain is worse at night time in them. It is

also used in management of cases where finger joints are highly damaged and distorted.

Sanguinaria Can – for shoulder joint pain

Sanguinaria Can works well to treat shoulder joint pain. It also helps to reduce attending stiffness in it. Shoulder pain gets worse by raising the arm in cases needing it. Worsening if pain at night is also noted in such cases.

Pulsatilla – For shifting pain.

Pulsatilla is highly recommended medicine to treat shifting pains in joints. The pain keeps on shifting. The affected joints are swollen and red. It is also indicated for joint pain in wet weather.

Causticum and Guaiacum – for managing cases with joint deformity.

Causticum and Guaiacum both are excellent medicines to manage advanced cases having joint deformity. Though these medicines can't reverse the joint damage and deformity. But they can help to reduce pain and stiffness in joints. They also help to manage swelling in the affected joints.

Apart from above commonly used medicine some other rare medicines to treat cases of rheumatoid arthritis include Lithium Carb, Ruta, Salicylic Acid, Calcarea Phos, Ferrum Met, Lactic acid and Natrum Sulph. The key symptoms to use these medicines are as follows.

Lithium Carb: Pain, swelling and tenderness in small joints. Relief in joint pain from hot applications. Node formation of joints.

Ruta: Stiffness and pain in feet and hand joints. Node formation on wrist joint.

Salicylic Acid: joint pain worsens from touch and motion. Shifting pains in joints.

Calcarea Phos: For joint pain worsening in cold weather

Ferrum Met: to treat anaemia with joint inflammation.

Lactic acid: joint pains with excessive weakness

Natrum Sulph: Joint pain in damp, cold weather

#### **Auxiliary Treatment**

- Changes in lifestyle
- Weight loss in case of obesity
- Proper balanced diet
- Exercise
- Proper water intake
- Reduce stress.
- Over physical exertion
- Physiotherapy

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