

Understanding Rheumatic Diseases

(NAPSA)—Many people start to feel pain and stiffness in their bodies over time. Sometimes, their hands or knees or shoulders get sore or hard to move, and may become swollen. These people may have arthritis, a condition believed to be caused by inflammation of the tissue lining the joints. It can be a challenge, but there are things people with rheumatic diseases can do to feel better.

Types of Rheumatic Diseases

The two most common types of arthritis are osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis. Osteoarthritis usually comes with age and most often affects the fingers, knees and hips. Rheumatoid arthritis happens when the body's own defense system—called the immune system—doesn't work properly.

What To Do

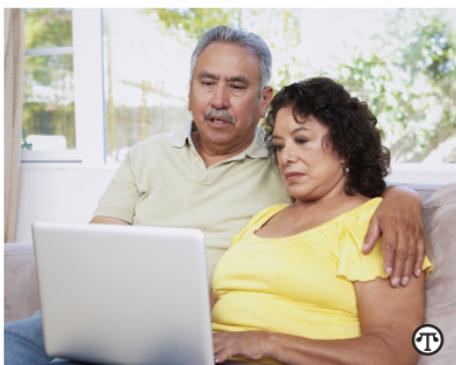
See a doctor. Only a doctor can tell if you have arthritis or a related condition and what to do about it. He or she will examine you and may take X-rays of your bones or joints. You may get a prescription for medicine to help with the pain, stiffness and inflammation. If you still have pain after taking your medicine, try:

- A warm shower
- Gentle stretching exercises
- An ice pack on the sore area
- Resting the sore joint
- Telling your doctor.

Lupus

Arthritis is often seen with lupus, an autoimmune disease in which the immune system turns against the body. More women than men have lupus, and it's less common in Caucasians than in other ethnicities.

Symptoms can include painful or swollen joints, fever, fatigue, a red rash across the nose and cheeks (called a "butterfly rash"), chest pain, hair loss, anemia, mouth ulcers, and pale or purple fingers and toes from cold and stress. Some people also experi-



Arthritis and lupus can be painful but doctors have many ways to help.

ence headaches, dizziness, depression, confusion or seizures.

No single test can determine whether a person has lupus, but several tests can help confirm a diagnosis and rule out other causes. Medicines used to treat lupus can include non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) like ibuprofen and naproxen, anti-malarials, corticosteroids, drugs that dampen the immune system (immunosuppressives), and drugs known as BlyS-specific inhibitors.

One key to managing lupus is to make healthy lifestyle choices such as eating well, exercising regularly and not smoking.

For More Help

The National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases (NIAMS), a part of the Department of Health and Human Services' National Institutes of Health (NIH), supports research into the causes, treatment and prevention of arthritis and musculoskeletal and skin diseases; the training of basic and clinical scientists to carry out this research; and the dissemination of information on research progress in these diseases.

Free Booklets

NIAMS offers free booklets, in English and in Spanish, on rheumatic diseases through its website, www.niams.nih.gov or call toll free (877) 226-4267.