

Writer: Do NOT write in this template. Please go to “File” > “Make a Copy”, and make a copy of this template for yourself. When the text box opens, check “Share with the Same People” and “Copy Comments and Suggestions.” Replace “Wellness.com - Writer Template” with “Title of Article”. Make a new copy of the original template for each article.

Writer	Lisa L
Author Byline	N/A
Type	Article
Word Count	591

First Editor	JLM
Fact Checked	JLM
Final Editor	LH
Ready Date	1/6/20

Featured Image [CM obtains image](#)

Special Instructions See [Client Brief](#)

Osteoarthritis or Rheumatoid? What's the Difference and How Can You Tell?

(Wellness.com) - Arthritis isn't a single disease but [several different conditions](#) that cause pain and inflammation in the joints. Osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis (RA) are the two most common of these conditions. Both can be disabling and disfiguring, but that's where the similarities end.

Quick Read:

Osteoarthritis and RA both cause joint pain, stiffness and inflammation, but they're two very different conditions. Osteoarthritis is caused by wear and tear and only affects isolated joints, whereas RA is caused by an autoimmune disease and usually targets specific (and usually symmetrical) joints. RA can also cause systemic symptoms like fever, appetite loss, fatigue and dryness in the eyes and mouth. See the article below for more details on how to tell the difference between osteoarthritis and RA.

Check Out the Differences Between Rheumatoid Arthritis and Osteoarthritis.

Writer: Do NOT write in this template. Please go to “File” > “Make a Copy”, and make a copy of this template for yourself. When the text box opens, check “Share with the Same People” and “Copy Comments and Suggestions.” Replace “Wellness.com - Writer Template” with “Title of Article”. Make a new copy of the original template for each article.

Osteoarthritis

More common than any other type of arthritis, [osteoarthritis](#) is caused by erosion of the protective cartilage between the bones. This may occur naturally over time or as the result of a condition that increases wear and tear, such as obesity, injury or structural issues with the joints or cartilage. This leads to swelling, pain and joint stiffness, especially in the morning or after sitting for extended periods. Women are more likely than men to develop this form of arthritis, and some people are more genetically predisposed than others, but in all people, the risks increase progressively with age.

Osteoarthritis is a progressive disease, and once there's damage, it's there for good. Over time, erosion can cause bone spurs, reduced range of motion and popping or crackling sounds upon movement. Staying as active as possible and taking NSAIDs when necessary may help to slow the disease's progression.

Rheumatoid Arthritis

[RA](#) is an autoimmune disease, which means the body's own immune system is responsible for the symptoms. It's also systemic, meaning it can affect the body well beyond the joints. People with RA may also experience fevers, fatigue, appetite loss and problems with dryness in the eyes and mouth.

RA can cause serious damage to the joints, and as with osteoarthritis, that damage is permanent. Left untreated, joints may become painfully disfigured and form nodules. Luckily, effective prescription treatments are available and gentle exercise regimens, along with periods of rest during flares, can reduce joint erosion.

Writer: Do NOT write in this template. Please go to “File” > “Make a Copy”, and make a copy of this template for yourself. When the text box opens, check “Share with the Same People” and “Copy Comments and Suggestions.” Replace “Wellness.com - Writer Template” with “Title of Article”. Make a new copy of the original template for each article.

Telling the Difference

RA and osteoarthritis can look alike in many ways, but their differences make them relatively easy to tell apart. Here are some of the most notable differences:

- **Age** - RA typically strikes a person between 30 and 50 years old, whereas osteoarthritis can occur at any time as long as there's been excessive wear on the joint.
- **One-sided vs. symmetrical pain** - RA causes systemic symptoms like fever and fatigue, and the joint pain is usually [symmetrical](#) -- meaning if one hand is affected, the other generally is, too. Since Osteoarthritis isn't a systemic disease, its effects are restricted solely to the affected joint or joints.
- **Affected areas** - RA can occur anywhere, but it tends to terrorize hands, wrists, elbows, knees and feet the most. When it targets the hands, it usually doesn't affect [the joints closest to the tips](#) --- a spot commonly affected by osteoarthritis.
- **Morning stiffness** - The length and degree of morning stiffness can be another clue. Periods of inactivity can cause both conditions to leave your joints hesitant to move, but RA can make that stiffness last for hours instead of minutes.

Arthritis can be painful and debilitating, but knowing which type you have and narrowing down your treatment options can be half the battle. Regardless of the type or cause, arthritis pain, stiffness and swelling are best addressed by a doctor. Both of these conditions can be disfiguring if left untreated, and earlier treatment could mean less threat of disability in the future.

~Here's to Your Health and Wellness

Copyright 2020, Wellness.com

Writer: Do NOT write in this template. Please go to “File” > “Make a Copy”, and make a copy of this template for yourself. When the text box opens, check “Share with the Same People” and “Copy Comments and Suggestions.” Replace “Wellness.com - Writer Template” with “Title of Article”. Make a new copy of the original template for each article.