

## Rheumatoid Arthritis of the Foot and Ankle



### Overview

Rheumatoid arthritis (we call it "RA") is a chronic disease. It affects joints throughout your body. It commonly starts in your hands or feet. For many people, it causes problems in the feet and ankles.

### Causes

RA is an autoimmune disease. It happens when your immune system attacks your body's own cells. We don't understand why this happens. It may be linked to your genes. It may be linked to something you are exposed to in your environment. And, your hormones may play a role.

### Symptoms

Unlike osteoarthritis, which often affects only a single joint, RA tends to affect both sides of your body equally. It can affect the same parts of both feet and ankles. It can cause stiffness, pain and swelling. Your arches may collapse. You may notice your toes shifting into abnormal positions, which can cause rubbing in your shoes. You may have callouses and sores on your skin. These symptoms can make it hard for you to walk.

### Treatment

Treatment depends on your needs. You may benefit from medications and from orthotics. If these aren't helpful, you may need surgery. Your healthcare provider can create a plan that's right for you.

