



# When should you see a Rheumatologist?



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We all have general musculoskeletal pains from time to time that last for just a few days. But, when pain in your joints, muscles, neck, back and bones is severe and persistent for more than a few days, you should see your doctor. Rheumatic diseases are difficult to identify in their early stages and you can have everyday symptoms that actually are related to much more complex conditions. Rheumatologists are your experts in this area and are trained to evaluate all of your symptoms to diagnose and treat your condition. They know it is imperative to find the correct diagnosis as rapidly as possible to begin appropriate treatment because many of these disorders respond best to treatment in the early stages of disease.

Many rheumatic diseases change or evolve, so you may have to make more than one office visit before your rheumatologist reaches a definitive diagnosis. The diagnostic process usually includes a complete medical history, physical examination and, if indicated, blood tests and x-rays.

### What is a Rheumatologist?

Rheumatologists are internists with special skills and training in the complex diagnosis and treatment of arthritis and rheumatic illnesses and much, much more. They treat patients with pain and disorders of the joints, muscles, tendons, bones and other connective tissues. Their strong foundation in internal medicine

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prepares them as specialists to manage localized and generalized pain while also considering other medications or conditions.

### What do Rheumatologists treat?

There are more than 100 types of rheumatologic diseases, including musculoskeletal pain disorders; back and neck pain, tendinitis, bursitis, nerve impingements (sciatica, cervical radiculopathy, carpal tunnel syndrome); osteoarthritis; autoimmune diseases such as rheumatoid arthritis, psoriatic arthritis, spondyloarthropathies, polymyalgia rheumatic, lupus, Sjogren's syndrome, antiphospholipid syndrome, scleroderma; and vasculitis; osteoporosis and osteopenia; gout; fibromyalgia; and Lyme arthritis.

### How does Arthritis and Rheumatism Associates, P.C., work with you?

Arthritis & Rheumatism Associates, P.C. (ARA), is the largest rheumatology practice in the Washington, D.C., area. For more than 30 years, our group has served this community and is dedicated to the diagnosis and treatment of our patients with pain and disorders of the joints, muscles, tendons and other connective tissue. Our practice has

treatment centers in Wheaton, Rockville and Chevy Chase, Maryland, and in Northwest Washington, DC.

Treating the total person, not just the disease, is the underlying philosophy at ARA. To this end, physicians consider the social and emotional impact of a disease or condition and collaborate with patients and their families as they develop treatment plans.

Our practice integrates excellent medical care with comprehensive services. Each of our four offices has a full-service laboratory, x-ray facilities, DEXA, infusion center, and physical therapy department. This allows physicians to personally review and provide test results to patients in a timely manner. Certified medical assistants, physical therapists, nurses (including infusion nurses and our triage nurse team), x-ray technologists and front office staff, work with physicians to form the patient care team at ARA. Together they coordinate all diagnostic work and treatment. This gives patients the comfort of knowing there is always someone who can answer questions and provide assistance. We offer patients the opportunity to access the most recent and innovative technologies such as musculoskeletal

ultrasound to assist in diagnosis and treatment and by maintaining an active clinical research program that participates in national trials to evaluate new medications for the treatment of arthritis, osteoporosis and a variety of rheumatic diseases.

The complex and changeable nature of many rheumatic diseases often requires ongoing assessment and evaluation. Patients benefit from the collective expertise of ARA physicians who meet frequently to discuss patient cases, new drug treatment protocols and promising research. In addition, based on the requirements of your treatment plan, our rheumatologists coordinate your care with the other professionals comprising your healthcare team. The physicians at ARA encourage the formation of close physician/patient and family relationships as they monitor conditions and modify treatment. Our goal is to reduce pain and maximize function.

At Arthritis and Rheumatism Associates, PC, we take pride in delivering exceptional care with the courtesy and respect you should expect. We know there are choices in selecting a physician or healthcare service and look forward to being your choice. ■