

Resource

Diagnosis of rheumatoid arthritis

RA can be very difficult to diagnose, as there is no single test to show whether or not you have the disease. Diagnosis is decided through a combination of blood tests, scans (such as X-ray or ultrasound) and an examination of your joints by a consultant rheumatologist.

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Rheumatoid arthritis symptoms include joint pain, often with stiffness and sometimes visible joint inflammation. The stiffness is usually worst in the morning and after periods of inactivity. In the morning this stiffness can last for a long time. Joints that are affected are usually symmetrical (meaning they are the same joints, on either side of the body). If you suspect you may have these symptoms, the first step is to speak to your GP, who will perform an initial examination and may do some blood tests if they think you could have RA.

RA can be very difficult to diagnose, as there is no single test to show whether or not you have the disease. If your GP suspects you may have RA, they will refer you to a specialist consultant, who will use a number of different factors to decide whether or not to diagnose you with this condition.

Rheumatoid arthritis is caused by your immune system attacking healthy joints, causing inflammation. Many of the tools used to help a consultant to diagnose RA look for signs of this inflammation in your body.

Diagnosis is decided through a combination of blood tests (including ESR, CRP, rheumatoid factor and anti-CCP), scans (such as X-ray or ultrasound) and an examination of your joints.

Early diagnosis is important so that your rheumatoid arthritis can be treated as soon as possible with medication that can ease symptoms and slow down or prevent joint damage.

If you feel that you may have RA, the next step would be to speak to your GP about your concerns. If they feel that it is possible that you have the disease, they will arrange for you to have these tests and



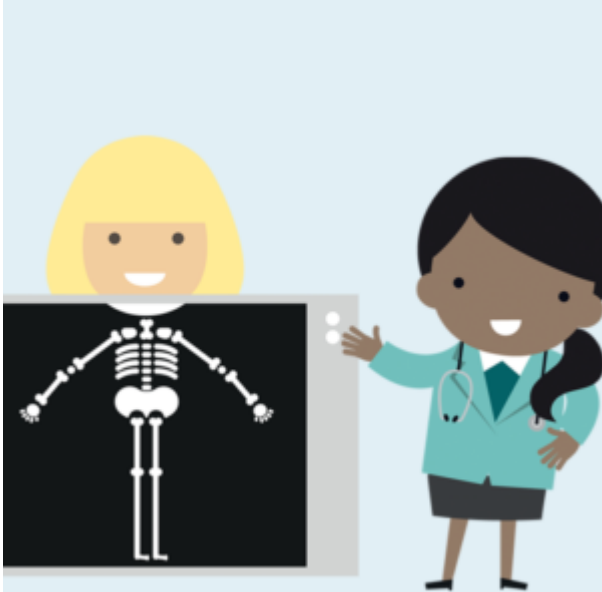
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[Getting the most from your initial consultation with your GP](#)

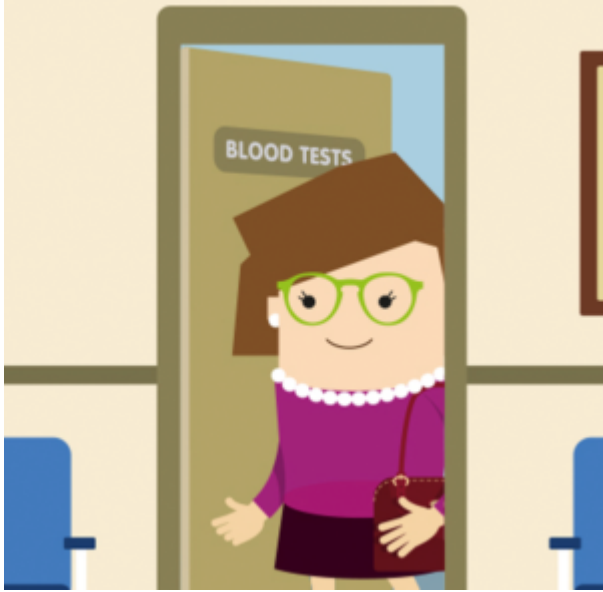
Early treatment has been shown to provide [improved disease outcomes in RA](#). It [helps affected RA get the most out of initial consultations with their GP](#), [improving their understanding of the condition, diagnosis and treatment](#).



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[Making a diagnosis of rheumatoid arthritis](#)

Diagnosis of RA is not straight forward as there is no individual test for RA. A diagnosis tends to be based on the basis of tests, physical examination and ruling out other



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[Understanding your RA blood tests](#)



the diagnosis of rheumatoid arthritis (RA) but also to assess the effectiveness of drugs that are used to treat RA.?

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Seropositive and seronegative

Seropositive or seronegative is a term used to describe whether you have rheumatoid factor (RF) and anti-CCP?(or ACPA) in your blood; two proteins more commonly found in people with RA

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Imaging in RA

There are a number of different imaging techniques that are used in the diagnosis and monitoring of rheumatoid arthritis, including X-ray, ultrasound and MRI.

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