Is it arthritis? Watch for these early warning signs

NOV 17, 2026

Featured topic and speaker

Are your aches and pains just part of getting older, or could they be signs of arthritis?

Sonali Khandelwal, MD, a rheumatologist at Rush University Medical Center, explains five early symptoms of arthritis you shouldn't ignore, including joint pain, morning stiffness, swelling, reduced movement and recurrent pain.

With more than 100 types of arthritis, early diagnosis can help you get the right treatment and protect your long-term joint health.

If you are experiencing joint symptoms, talk with your doctor about what may be causing them.

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Speaker

- **Sonali Khandelwal, MD**, rheumatologist, Rush University Medical Center

Transcript

URL: https://patients.ama-assn.org/public-health/chronic-diseases/it-arthritis-watch-these-early-warning-signs
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Dr. Khandelwal: If your joints are creaking, popping, cracking, it might not be arthritis. But here are the early warning signs you should be aware of. I'm Doctor Sonali Khandelwal. I'm a rheumatologist at Rush University Medical Center, and I'm an AMA member.

Arthritis defines a condition which affects your joints. There are over 100 different types of arthritis. And the type you have depends on the age of your presentation, your symptoms, the symptom severity, sometimes genetics, medical history. One of the most common symptoms of arthritis is joint pain.

Joint pain can occur in one joint or multiple joints. This can occur all day, sometimes in the morning, worse in the evening, but often the pain is recurrent. Mechanical wear and tear over time leads to loss of cartilage, and that causes pain in the joints. You may wake up in the morning and not be able to bend your back or bend your knees as you are usually used to, or you may notice that you have decreased grip strength.

Another symptom that you may have is swelling. You may experience puffy fingers, puffy wrists. Depending on the joint involved, you will feel sometimes redness and warmth, and this is a reason to seek care. One of the signs of arthritis is reduced movement. So you may experience difficulty walking or climbing stairs, difficulty with grip strength, opening and closing jars, or opening doors. Or you may have reduced range of motion with normal activities that you were able to do before.

Recurrent pain is another sign of arthritis that should not be ignored. Recurrent pain can often be seen in the inflammatory arthritides, and is a sign that you need to have your physician evaluate for further causes. Your doctor will use your clinical presentation, previous medical history, history of injuries, as well as family history to help diagnose the type of arthritis. If you have any concerns about your joint symptoms, please talk to your doctor.

Disclaimer: This video is for educational purposes only and is not medical advice. If you have questions about your health, please consult your doctor.

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