

REHUMATIC DISEASES THAT COMPROMISE HIP AND KNEE JOINTS

Arthritis literally means “joint swelling”. There are many medical conditions and diseases that can cause joint swelling that fall into two different categories:

1. Metabolic diseases that affect all body parts.
2. Auto-immune diseases that attack synovial membranes and cartilage. (synovial membrane is a specialized tissue that covers all joints and produces synovial fluid which functions as a biological joint lubricant.)

Both metabolic and auto-immune diseases damage articular cartilage resulting in progressive cartilage destruction and degeneration that manifests as swelling, pain, deformity, rigidity and loss of function.

Even though there are many rheumatic diseases that affect people’s joints, the most common ones that affect hips and knees are:

1. Rheumatoid arthritis.
2. Ankylosing spondylitis
3. Lupus
4. Gout

Symptoms:

Pain in the affected joint is the main complaint of patients with a rheumatoid disease. It usually affects hands, shoulders, hips, knees and spine but it can involve any joint in our body. Pain is usually accompanied by swelling, crackling, and stiffness.

When the disease affects patient’s hips or knees he/she will notice progressive pain, limping, stiffness, and loss of function limiting patient’s daily activities. In time, it will get harder and harder to walk, stand, sit, squat and climb stairs.

Diagnosis:

One of the first things the attending physicians will do when reviewing a patient with a complaint of hip or knee pain is to determine if a rheumatic disease is the cause. After a complete medical examination, x-rays and some blood tests he/she will let you know if you have a rheumatic disease.

Treatment:

Treatment is usually started by a rheumatologist and its main goal is to control pain, control rigidity and to slow advancement of the disease. Non steroidal anti-inflammatory agents are usually prescribed to mitigate pain, but patients

with multiple advanced joint degeneration and pain might require the use of steroids or chemotherapy.

Physiotherapy and exercise play a key role in the treatment of these kind of patients.

Surgical Treatment:

When pain, rigidity and deformity can no longer be controlled with medications and physiotherapy, joint replacement surgery is the next feasible solution to help patients control pain, gain mobility and return to their daily activities.

Dear patient: if you have any doubts or questions regarding rheumatic diseases, please contact us to let us know all your worries. Remember that we are here to help you.

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NOTE: The main reason for the above information is to aid patients. We are not responsible for the decisions made by patients without previously consulting their attending physician.