

What Is Migratory Arthritis?

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Migratory arthritis occurs when pain spreads from one joint to another. In this type of arthritis, the first joint may start to feel better before pain starts in a different joint. Although migratory arthritis can affect people who have other forms of arthritis, it can also result from a serious illness.

• Forms of Arthritis

Arthritis is a broad term that describes joint inflammation (swelling). Pain occurs when the joint space between the bones swell up. This can happen over many years or suddenly. Migratory arthritis is most prevalent in cases of:

- **Osteoarthritis**
- rheumatoid arthritis (RA), an autoimmune disorder in which your body attacks healthy tissues
- gout, a form caused by crystal buildups between joints
- lupus
- **How Arthritis Spreads**

Chronic inflammation is often a determining factor in the way arthritis spreads. In RA, the destruction of joint tissues can increase the risk of migratory arthritis. Chronic swelling associated with lupus can cause migration of pain at any time. Patients with gout often experience pain from crystallization between joints in the toes first before it migrates to other joints.

You can't predict when arthritis will spread, so it's important to start treatment as soon as possible.

• Arthritis Caused by Illnesses

Having arthritis certainly increases your risk for migrating joint pain, but that doesn't mean it's the only cause of migratory arthritis. Rheumatic fever, an inflammatory illness, is a common cause of migratory arthritis. This fever stems from strep throat and can cause joint swelling and pain, among other complications.

Other inflammatory illnesses that may cause migratory arthritis are:

- inflammatory bowel disease (IBD)
- hepatitis B & C
- severe bacterial infections, such as Whipple's disease

• How to Detect Migratory Arthritis

Pain is often the first symptom you notice when something is wrong with your body. Pain in a specific joint may lead you to suspect arthritis or another health condition. When the pain stops and moves to a joint in another part of your body, you may be experiencing migratory arthritis. Migratory arthritis can also cause:

- redness from visibly swollen joints
- rashes
- fever
- weight changes

• Treat the Pain Before it Migrates

Stopping pain is often the only priority for arthritis patients. But for real relief, it's also important to treat the inflammation that's causing your pain. Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), such as ibuprofen, may be effective in treating both pain and inflammation. Naproxen is a common prescription medication used to treat arthritis swelling. For immediate pain relief, your doctor may also prescribe topical creams.

Treating joint pain and inflammation early on can decrease the chances for migration.

• Lifestyle Makes a Difference

Medications play a key role in migratory arthritis treatment, but your lifestyle can also help to determine the long-term outlook of your condition. A healthy diet can help keep your weight down, reducing the pressure on already strained joints. Diets rich in omega-3 fatty acids found in salmon and tuna may reduce inflammation. The University of Maryland Medical Center recommends eating these types of fish twice a week or more ([UMMC](#)).

Working out may be the last thing you feel like doing, but regular exercise can benefit your joints in the long-run. Walking or swimming can offer the most benefits without the extra pain.

• Don't Take the Pain

Dealing with arthritis pain is bad enough, but when the symptoms spread to other joints, migratory arthritis can quickly interfere with your life. Address the pain immediately by speaking with your doctor—even if you've never been diagnosed with arthritis before. Identifying the initial cause is crucial to joint pain relief. A visit with your doctor can put you on the right track to getting your life back.