Tips for Coping With Migratory Rheumatoid Arthritis

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Migratory Rheumatoid Arthritis

As the name implies, migratory arthritis causes pain to move from one joint to another. Arthritis is a broad term that defines joint inflammation and pain. Migratory arthritis is the result of chronic inflammation that spreads to different joints and mostly associated with rheumatoid arthritis, osteoarthritis, gout and lupus. In RA, damage to joint tissues ups the risk of the pain moving to different joints.

Osteoarthritis is a degenerative condition with minimal joint inflammation, but with significant joint destruction. The pain and inflammation in gout is caused by urate crystal buildup between the joints. Lupus shares some similarities with rheumatoid arthritis – the pain migrates from one joint to another as the diseases progresses. Other medical conditions such as inflammatory bowel disease (IBD), hepatitis B & C and various bacterial infections can also cause migratory arthritis.

Regardless of the form of arthritis, you can't predict which joint will be affected next. Therefore, it is important to start treatment as soon as possible, as early treatment is the only way to prevent migration to another joint.

Migratory Rheumatoid Arthritis – Diagnosis & Treatment

Your doctor will perform physical examination, evaluate your medical history, order some blood tests (i.e. Erythrocyte sedimentation rate or ESR, rheumatoid factor or RF and anti-cyclic citrullinated peptide or anti-CCP antibodies) in order to confirm the diagnosis. The progression of RA is assessed with x-rays.

While ibuprofen or naproxen (non-steroid anti inflammatory drugs) can be prescribed for other types of migratory arthritis, there are certain drugs that are specifically used to manage joint pain and inflammation in RA.

Corticosteroid medication is usually prescribed short term, during flare-ups. Disease modifying anti rheumatic drugs (DMARDs) help to slow down the progression of the RA and possibly save the joints from being damaged permanently. Immunosuppressant's and TNF-alpha inhibitors are used to tame the immune system and therefore control the inflammation. When the drugs can't control enough the symptoms, surgery is the next to consider.

Controlling Joint Pain and Inflammation

- Do you know when the best time to take NSAIDs is? Studies are showing that the best time to take Ibuprofen or other NSAIDs is after an evening meal and then again when you wake up in the morning (because the RA symptoms increase gradually during the night, and are very intense in the morning). If you take NSAIDs with food you decrease the risk of stomach upset, but it may make them less effective.
- Besides following the treatment recommended by your doctor, you can improve your joint pain and inflammation (and your overall health) with lifestyle changes. Working out may not be on your to do list when you are in pain, but try to stay as active as you can. Start with easy exercises such as stretching and as the symptoms improve, start to try mild strength training. The next step is aerobic exercise like walking

and swimming. Tai chi and yoga are also good choices. A healthy diet with plenty of antioxidants (from fresh fruits and veggies) and omega 3 fatty acids (fish, olive oil, nuts and seeds) can keep your weight down, and reduce your joint inflammation.