Rheumatoid arthritis (RA) is a chronic, inflammatory autoimmune disease that causes a range of symptoms, including pain and swelling in the joints. RA affects the lining of the joints, particularly those in the hands, feet and knees and can cause irreversible joint damage.

**SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS**

RA often affects smaller joints first (e.g., of the hands or toes). As the disease progresses, symptoms may spread to the wrists, knees, ankles, elbows, hips and shoulders.

RA symptoms include:

- Tiredness, fever and weight loss
- Stiffness, commonly in the morning
- Functional decline
- Joint pain and swelling, often occurring symmetrically (the same or similar joints are affected on both sides of the body)

Approximately 40% of patients also experience signs and symptoms in areas of the body where there are no joints, such as the skin, eyes, lungs, heart and kidneys.

**CAUSES OF RA**

The exact cause of RA is unknown. It is considered to be an autoimmune disease, where the immune system mistakes the body’s healthy tissue for a threat and attacks it.

**PREVALENCE AND PATIENTS**

RA affects approximately 17.6 M people worldwide and 2.9 M people in Europe.

In women, the most common age of onset is between 30 and 60, often occurring later in life for men.

80-85% of people with RA experience joint damage within the first few years of disease.

Nearly 3x as many women are affected by RA compared to men.