### Types of arthritis

There are around 200 types of arthritis - or musculoskeletal conditions - which are split into seven main groups: 26

- **Inflammatory arthritis**
- **Degenerative or mechanical arthritis**
- **Soft tissue musculoskeletal pain**
- **Back pain**
- **Connective tissue disease**
- **Infectious arthritis**
- **Metabolic arthritis**.

#### Examples of inflammatory arthritis include:

- RA
- Reactive arthritis
- Ankylosing spondylitis
- Arthritis associated with colitis or psoriasis.

#### Connective tissue disease (CTD)

- SLE
- Scleroderma (systemic sclerosis)
- Dermatomyositis.

#### Infectious arthritis

- Salmonella and Shigella (food poisoning or contamination)
- Chlamydia and gonorrhea (sexually transmitted diseases)
- Hepatitis C (a blood-to-blood infection, often through shared needles or transfusions).

#### Metabolic arthritis

- Gout

If your symptoms and physical examination suggest rheumatoid arthritis, lupus, Sjogren’s syndrome, Lyme disease or one of a few other inflammatory forms of arthritis, the following tests can often confirm your doctor’s suspicions:

#### Antinuclear antibody (ANA)

While lab tests aren’t needed for every form of arthritis, they are very important to verify and confirm the presence of some diseases, according to Robert Lahita, MD, chief of rheumatology at St. Luke’s/Roosevelt Hospital and associate professor of medicine at Columbia University. If your symptoms and physical examination suggest rheumatoid arthritis, lupus, Sjogren’s syndrome, Lyme disease or one of a few other inflammatory...
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<td><strong>Rheumatoid factor (RF)</strong></td>
<td>Designed to detect and measure the level of an antibody that acts against the blood component gamma globulin, this test is often positive in people with rheumatoid arthritis.</td>
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<td><strong>Anti-cyclic citrullinated peptide (anti-CCP)</strong></td>
<td>Also called anti-citrullinated protein antibodies (ACPA), this test (like the test for rheumatoid factor) looks for the presence of a particular autoantibody that is present in approximately 60-80 percent of people with RA. While most patients with anti-CCP antibodies are also positive for rheumatoid factor, the RF antibody can occur in patients with many other conditions, including an infection. Anti-CCP is more specific for RA and is becoming the preferred test.</td>
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<td><strong>Uric acid</strong></td>
<td>By measuring the level of uric acid in the blood, this test helps doctors diagnose gout, a condition that occurs when excess uric acid crystallizes and forms deposits in the joints and other tissues, causing inflammation and severe pain.</td>
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<td><strong>HLA tissue typing</strong></td>
<td>This test, which detects the presence of certain genetic markers in the blood, can often confirm a diagnosis of ankylosing spondylitis (a disease involving inflammation of the spine and sacroiliac joint) or reactive arthritis (a disease involving inflammation of the urethra, eyes and joints). The genetic marker HLA-B27 is almost always present in people with either of these diseases.</td>
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<td><strong>Erythrocyte sedimentation rate</strong></td>
<td>Also called ESR or “sed rate,” this test measures how fast red blood cells cling together, fall and settle (like sediment) in the bottom of a glass tube over the course of an hour. The higher the sed rate, the greater the amount of inflammation. There are many conditions that can cause an elevated ESR, including an infection or anemia.</td>
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<td><strong>C-reactive protein</strong></td>
<td>This test, also called CRP, is another blood test that measures body-wide inflammation. It measures a substance produced by the liver that increases in the presence of inflammation.</td>
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<td><strong>Lyme serology</strong></td>
<td>This test detects an immune response to the infectious agent that causes Lyme disease and thus can be used to confirm a diagnosis of the disease.</td>
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| **Skin biopsy**                                                      | Taking small samples of skin and examining them under a microscope can help doctors diagnose forms of arthritis that involve the skin, such as lupus, vasculitis (inflammation of...
the blood vessels) and psoriatic arthritis.

**Muscle biopsy**

By going a little deeper into the tissue than with the skin biopsy, the surgeon can take a sample of muscle to be examined for signs of damage to the muscle fibers. Findings can confirm a diagnosis of polymyositis or vasculitis.

**Joint fluid tests**

In this procedure, which is similar to drawing blood, the doctor inserts a needle into a joint space and removes fluid. An examination of the fluid may reveal uric acid crystals, confirming a diagnosis of gout; it can also reveal the presence of other types of crystals. Bacteria cultured from joint fluid can demonstrate that the joint inflammation is caused by an infection.

**Muscle Enzyme tests (CPK, aldolase)**

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**Creatinine test**

This test is used to determine the extent of kidney function by measuring the level of creatinine, a normal waste product of the muscles, in the blood. A test showing a high level of creatinine means that the kidneys are not working well enough to remove waste products from the body. Doctors may use this test to monitor kidney function in people with lupus or in those taking medications that could affect the kidneys.

**Liver enzyme tests (SGOT, SGPT, bilirubin, alkaline phosphatase)** –

These tests, which measure levels of liver enzymes in the blood, can help doctors determine if certain medications have caused damage to the liver.

**Hematocrit (HCT) and hemoglobin (Hgb)** –

These tests measure the number and quality of your red blood cells. Low counts may suggest that your medications are causing gastrointestinal bleeding.

**White blood cell count** –

A blood test showing a low number of infection-fighting white blood cells may suggest that your medication is decreasing your supply of white blood cells and, thus, your body’s chances of fighting infection.

**Platelet count** –

This test measures the number of platelets, or “sticky” cells, that help the blood to clot. A low number of platelets could suggest that your medication has put you at risk of bleeding heavily.

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