



Orthopedic Associates OF PORT HURON

Rheumatology & Osteoporosis

Our Rheumatology and Osteoporosis practice provides ongoing non-surgical care for patients with arthritis, osteoporosis, systemic lupus, fibromyalgia, connective tissue disease and other joint, muscle and bone diseases. We offer a board certified Rheumatologist who treats adult and pediatric arthritis.

About Rheumatology – What is a Rheumatologist?

Rheumatology is a subspecialty field of Internal Medicine devoted to the care of patients with rheumatic diseases. These diseases are often manifested, at least in part, by the symptoms of arthritis. However, there are many diseases which may have arthritis as only a part (or not at all) of their clinical picture that also fall under the scope of Rheumatology.

Autoimmunity is one of the symptoms that different types of arthritic and related rheumatologic disorders have in common. With arthritis, the immune system attacks the lining of the joints resulting in inflammation (redness, swelling, warmth, tenderness, and decreased motion) in and around the joint. However, this disease may present with a host of other symptoms including hair loss, skin rashes, mouth ulcers, lymph node enlargement, chest or abdominal pain, dry eyes and mouth, genital ulcers, and involvement of internal organs such as lungs, kidneys, or other systems.

What Kind of Training Do Rheumatologists Have?

After finishing medical school and three years of training in Internal Medicine, rheumatologists devote an additional two to three years in specialized Rheumatology training. Most of the rheumatologists who plan to treat patients choose to become Board Certified upon completion of their training. They must pass a rigorous exam conducted by the American Board of Internal Medicine to become certified.

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What Do Rheumatologists Treat?

Rheumatologists treat arthritis, certain autoimmune diseases, musculoskeletal pain disorders and osteoporosis. There are more than 100 types of these diseases, including rheumatoid arthritis, osteoarthritis, gout, lupus, back pain, osteoporosis, ankylosing spondylitis, scleroderma, fibromyalgia, and tendonitis. Some of these are very serious diseases that can be difficult to diagnose and treat.

When Should You See a Rheumatologist?

If musculoskeletal pains are not severe or disabling and last just a few days, it makes sense to give the problem a reasonable chance to be resolved. But sometimes pain in the joints, muscles or bones is severe or persists for more than a few days. At that point, you should see your physician.

Many types of rheumatic diseases are not easily identified in the early stages. Rheumatologists are specially trained to do the detective work necessary to discover the causes of swelling and pain. It is important to determine a correct diagnosis early so the appropriate treatment can begin early. Some musculoskeletal disorders respond best to treatment in the early stages of the disease.

Because some rheumatic diseases are complex, one visit to a rheumatologist may not be enough to determine the diagnosis and course of treatment. These diseases often change or evolve over time. Rheumatologists work closely with patients to identify the problem and design an individualized treatment program.

What Kind of Medication Do Rheumatologists Use to Treat Patients?

Rheumatologists use non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medications including Motrin, Advil or Aleve. We also use steroids as anti-inflammatory medications to decrease the inflammation. Because many of the arthritis and related disorders are autoimmune in nature, we use medications that target the immune system. These are called immune suppressors. They are similar to cancer medications but we use them in lower doses. For those medications, the patient needs to be carefully monitored with physical examinations and laboratory tests on a regular basis because of the types of medications they are taking.

Summary

In summary, the role of a rheumatologist is very important in a community to treat patients who have musculoskeletal diseases and connective tissue disorders. They are also an integral part of the musculoskeletal team as a consultant with

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the physicians in the diagnosis and management of these diseases, as well as providing accurate information to the patients and their families.

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