Rheumatoid Arthritis: Spot These Signs Before Permanent Damage Transcript

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Introduction to Rheumatoid Arthritis Warning Signs

Welcome back all of you rheumatoid arthritis warrior to our channel The Room Doc. I'm Dr. Andhra Subedi, a board certified rheumeatologist. Today we are talking about something that breaks my heart in the clinic every single week.

Patients who come to me with permanent joint damage. Damage that could have been prevented if they had just known what to look for. Let me tell you about one of my patients.

She's a 38 year old lady, a mom, teacher. One morning she woke up and her fingers just fell stuck. Not painful at first, just stiff. She shook it off, she thought, I'm just getting older.

I am stressed. She waited for another 14 months before she finally sat in my office. 14 Months. And by the time I saw her, the damage in her joints has already started.

The rheumatoid arthritis is not just wear and tear. It's an autoimmune disease where immune systems attack your own joints.

Morning Stiffness as an Early Red Flag

and the scariest part, it whispers before it sounds. Today I'm going to share 5 early warning signs of rheumatoid arthritis that most people ignore. If your body is whispering, I want you to hear it.

Let's get into it! Sign number 1 is morning stiffness that lasts for more than 30 minutes. This is a classic hallmark of RA. It's normal to wake up a little stiff.

If you have osteoarthritis, the wear and tear variety of arthritis, you might feel stiff for 5 to 10 minutes, but as soon as you get moving, it loosen up.

But the RA stiffness is very different. It is profound. Patients tell me they can even open a jar. They can button a shirt. They can even hold their toothbrush.

And this stiffness lasts for more than 30 minutes, an hour or sometimes even for several hours. Think of it like a rusty hinge. The inflammation settles into the joint overnight while you are resting.

it takes a long time for the movement to pump that inflammation out of your joint.

Soft Swelling in Small Joints

If your morning stiffness is sealing your mourning that is a major red flag for rheumatoid arthritis. Sign number two the soft swelling in your small joints.

RA loves the small joints. I'm talking about your knuckles, the base of your finger and then the wrist. It can also affect your toes joint too. But here is the key, it is not hard bony swelling like you see in osteoarthritis, It is this soft.

it feels squeezy almost like a tiny water balloon over the joint. You can try the squeeze test at home. Gently squeeze across your knuckles. If they are giving yourself a handshake, if that causes significant pain, or if the joints feel spongy, that is inflammation.

And here is the tricky part. Early on, this swelling can come and go. Don't let it fool you into thinking you are just fine.

Deep Fatigue and Inflammatory Exhaustion

The third important sign is deep fatigue. This is a type of fatigue that sleep does not fix. I'm not talking about being tired because you had a long day at work.

I am talking this crossing, overwhelming exhaustion. Why does this happen? Because your immune system is running a background program. Think of your smartphone.

When an app is heavily running on the background, it drains the battery fast, even if the screen is turned off. In RA, your immune system is constantly churning out inflammatory protein called cytokines.

Your body is fighting a war inside and that takes a massive amount of energy. Nearly 50% of early rheumatoid arthritis patients experience this profound fatigue before the joint pain even becomes severe.

Sign number four, the pain pattern is very important.

Pain That Improves With Movement

The pain is typically worse in the morning and better with movement. This is just the opposite of what most people expect. With osteoarthritis, The more you use the joint, the more it hurts.

If you walk all day, your knees hurt at night. With RA, the inflammation builds up when you are still inactive. With RE, The inflammation build up, when are you still and resting.

Resting makes it worse. Movement actually make it feel better, but temporarily. If you feel terrible when wake up but you must feel much better after you moving around for few hours, that is an inflammatory pain pattern.

So the fifth sign is flu like symptoms. A flu-like feeling that just don't go away. Remember rheumatoid arthritis is a systemic inflammation meaning it affects your whole body not just your joints.

Flu-Like Systemic Symptoms

You can have constitutional symptoms, you might have a low-grade fever, You might lose your appetite, you might loose weight without trying. You just feel achy and unwell like you are coming down with the flu.

But the flue never fully go away. And this is your immune system pulling the fire alarm when there is no fire in your body. Let's get back to our patient.

when she finally came to me we did the blood work and the x-rays and we found early joint damage what we call erosion actually that is a bone damage happening in her joint but here's the good news we started her on treatment immediately within three months her morning stiffness went from two hours to zero The swelling disappeared, she got her energy back and she is now in full remission.

Why Early Treatment Matters

But she still has those small joint damage in her x-rays and told me, Dr. Subhiti, I wish I had not waited. Here is why I am telling you this. in rheumatology we have what we call the window of opportunity it is the first three to six months of the disease if we catch ra in that window and treat it aggressively we can stop the diseases in its tracks and prevent permanent joint damage entirely that's why i'm giving you this five checklists and screenshot this right now the number one morning stiffness lasting for more than 30 minutes number two soft squeezy swelling in your small joints.

The bone deep fatigue. Pain that is worse in the morning and better with movement. And the lingering flu-like symptoms. If you have two or more of these signs, do not wait.

Call your doctor immediately. Ask for a referral to a rheumatologist. All of you arthritis warrior, if your body is whispering, do not wait for it to sound.

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Remember, you are not just a patient. You are an informed advocate for your own health. I'll see you in my next video. Bye bye.