

# INFORMATION

information



VICTORIA

inc. OSTEOPOROSIS VICTORIA

## REITER'S SYNDROME (REACTIVE ARTHRITIS)

### What is it?

Reiter's syndrome is an arthritis that produces pain, swelling, redness and heat in the joints. It can also affect other parts of the body, and may lead to inflammation of the eyes, urinary tract and skin. This syndrome is sometimes called a "reactive arthritis" which means that the arthritis occurs as a reaction to an infection elsewhere in the body.

### Why does it occur?

The exact cause of Reiter's syndrome is unknown. It often begins following a bacterial infection in the intestine (Salmonella, Shigella, Campylobacter or Yersinia) or genito-urinary tract (Chlamydia).

### Who does it affect?

Reiter's syndrome most commonly develops in men between the ages of 20 and 40 years, although women can also develop the disorder.

It is not known exactly why some people exposed to certain bacteria develop the disorder and others do not. However, the presence of a certain gene (HLA-B27) increases a person's likelihood of developing Reiter's syndrome.

The tendency to develop Reiter's syndrome can also run in families.

### Outlook

The majority of people who develop Reiter's syndrome will have an arthritis that will improve spontaneously over a few months. Recurrence of symptoms may occur in some of these people. In about 20% of cases a long term arthritis persists and requires ongoing

treatment.

### The symptoms

Symptoms depend greatly on the part(s) of the body affected. General symptoms may include

- Inflammation of joints and tendons
- Inflammation of the eye
- Rash
- Fever
- Weight loss.

### Diagnosis

There is no specific test to diagnosis Reiter's syndrome. Diagnosis will usually involve a physical examination and may include tests to rule out other causes of symptoms or to test for infection. Tests may include blood and urine . Fluid from a joint may also be taken.

### Management

Treatment depends on the part(s) of the body affected and may include:

- Medication
- Exercise
- Treatment of specific symptoms, eg medicated creams.

### Education

A better understanding of Reiter's syndrome will greatly assist you in making decisions about the management of your condition. Arthritis Victoria's education programs can assist you to develop the skills and knowledge needed to make these decisions.

They also provide opportunities to meet others in similar situations. Arthritis Victoria

can also put you in touch with local support groups, other relevant organizations and appropriate exercise groups for your condition.

## FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

### Resource Centre

- Lorig, Kate & Fries, James 2006, *The arthritis helpbook : A tested self-management program for coping with arthritis and fibromyalgia*, Da Capo Lifelong, Cambridge, MA.
- *The Arthritis Foundations tips for good living with arthritis* (2001), Arthritis Foundation of America, Atlanta, GA.

*\*All listed books and videos are available on loan from the Arthritis Victoria Resource Centre to members. If you would like to find out more about becoming a member call: (03) 8531 8000.*

### Courses

Arthritis Victoria Self management courses and exercise classes. Call 03 8531 8000 for information on the course or class most suited to your needs.

### Support/Self Help Groups

For information about the support group nearest you, phone our Community Development Co-ordinator on (03) 8531 8000.

### Websites

- Arthritis Victoria  
[www.arthritisvic.org.au](http://www.arthritisvic.org.au)
- Arthritis USA  
[www.arthritis.org](http://www.arthritis.org)
- Arthritis Research Campaign UK  
[www.arc.org.uk](http://www.arc.org.uk)
- National Institute for Arthritis, Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases [www.nih.gov/niams](http://www.nih.gov/niams)
- American College of Rheumatology  
[www.rheumatology.org](http://www.rheumatology.org)
- Medlineplus  
[www.medlineplus.gov](http://www.medlineplus.gov)
- American Autoimmune Related Diseases Association  
[www.aarda.org](http://www.aarda.org)

## ARTHRITIS VICTORIA

If you would like further information please contact our telephone information service on **(03) 8531 8000** or **1800 011 041** (country callers)



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Prepared by Education & Services staff, Arthritis Victoria, November 2002. This material is for your information and is not intended to be medical advice. You are encouraged to review the information provided with your doctor or relevant health professional.