Rheumatoid arthritis is a chronic disease that causes inflammation in the joints and certain other organs throughout the body. It is called an autoimmune disorder. It is believed that the body’s immune system accidentally mistakes its own tissues for foreign invaders. The immune system attacks the joints and organs, causing damage.

Rheumatoid Arthritis

Researchers are not sure what causes the immune system to respond so destructively. It may be caused by a combination of factors, including:

- Genes—People with rheumatoid arthritis may have a specific genetic defect that increases their risk for developing this condition.
- Defects in the immune system may cause the immune cells to fail to recognize the body’s own tissues.
- Infection with specific viruses or bacteria that kick off an abnormal immune response.
- Chemical or hormonal imbalances in the body.

More than two million Americans (about 1% of the total population) have rheumatoid arthritis.

What are the risk factors for rheumatoid arthritis?
What are the symptoms of rheumatoid arthritis?
How is rheumatoid arthritis diagnosed?
What are the treatments for rheumatoid arthritis?
Are there screening tests for rheumatoid arthritis?
How can I reduce my risk of rheumatoid arthritis?
What questions should I ask my doctor?
What is it like to live with rheumatoid arthritis?
Where can I get more information about rheumatoid arthritis?

REFERENCES: