

RHEUMATOID VASCULITIS

WHAT IS RHEUMATOID VASCULITIS?

Rheumatoid vasculitis (RV) refers to patients with rheumatoid arthritis, a chronic disease with painful inflammation of the joints, who also develop inflammatory disease in small and medium-sized blood vessels. RV most commonly occurs in the skin as venulitis or capillaritis, meaning the smallest blood vessels are affected by inflammation from the disease. RV occurs in approximately 2 to 5 % of patients who have active rheumatoid arthritis.

SYMPTOMS

Symptoms often don't start until several years after you have had RA, for about 10 years or more. Rheumatoid vasculitis can affect blood vessels in many parts of your body. For this reason, it can cause many different symptoms. It most often damages blood vessels to the skin, fingers and toes, nerves, eyes, and heart. This reduces blood flow to these areas and damages them.

Many people with rheumatoid vasculitis have general symptoms, such as tiredness, fever, and weight loss. These symptoms are common in RA as well. But people with rheumatoid vasculitis usually have them more severely.

TREATMENT

Treatment may vary depending on how severe the vasculitis is and which blood vessels are affected. Inflammation is controlled by using corticosteroids or stronger immunosuppressive medicine such as cyclophosphamide or biologics that is typically used to treat rheumatoid arthritis.