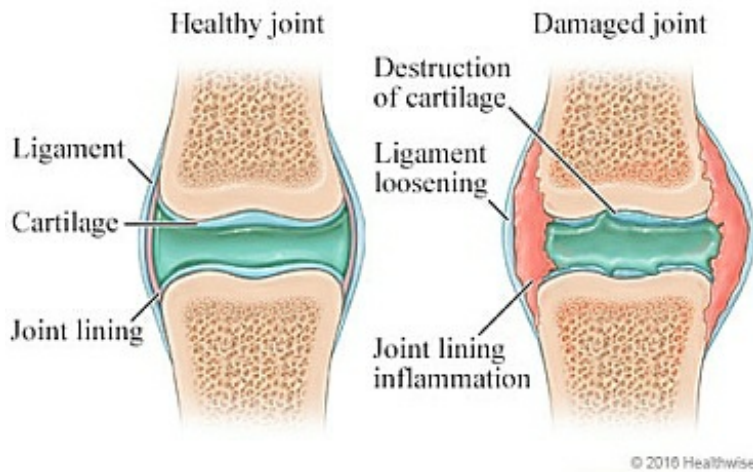


# Septic Arthritis: Care Instructions



## Your Care Instructions

Septic arthritis is a bacterial infection in a joint. This occurs when an infection from another part of the body, such as pneumonia or a skin or kidney infection, travels through the bloodstream to the joint. It may also spread to the joint from an infection in nearby soft tissue, or it can follow a surgery or injury. The joint is often warm, swollen, and tender.

Early treatment can prevent permanent damage to the joint. Treatment includes antibiotics and draining the joint to remove the infection. Depending on which part of your body is infected, your doctor may drain the joint with a needle or you may need surgery to drain the joint.

**Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety.** Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

## How can you care for yourself at home?

- You will receive antibiotics through a vein (IV) at first. After this, you may take antibiotics by mouth.
- Take your antibiotics as directed. Do not stop taking them just because you feel better. You need to take the full course of antibiotics.
- Rest the joint as much as you can.
- If possible, prop up the injured joint on pillows as much as possible for the next 3 days. Try to keep it at or above the level of your heart. This can help reduce pain and swelling.
- Follow your doctor's instructions on exercises for the affected joint.
- Do not smoke. Smoking can make it harder for your body to fight the infection. If you need help quitting, talk to your doctor about stop-smoking programs and medicines. These can increase your chances of quitting for good.

## When should you call for help?

**Call your doctor now** or seek immediate medical care if:

- You have worse symptoms of infection, such as:
  - Increased pain, swelling, warmth, or redness.
  - Red streaks leading from the area.
  - Pus draining from the area.
  - A fever.
- You cannot use your joint.

Watch closely for changes in your health, and be sure to contact your doctor if:

- You do not get better as expected.

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