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 know 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

- *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.

Websites

- Arthritis Vic: www.arthritisvic.org.au
- Arthritis USA: www.arthritis.org
- Arthritis Research Campaign UK: www.arc.org.uk
- National Institute for Arthritis, Musculoskeletal and Skin: www.nih.gov/niams
- Medlineplus: www.medlineplus.gov

Support/Self Help Groups

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