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Q. What is arthropathy?

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Matthew Hoffman, MD
Internal Medicine
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A. Arthropathy just means “joint problem.” Doctors often use arthropathy interchangeably with arthritis, which means “joint inflammation.”

There are some forms of arthropathy that are distinct from arthritis:

- Neuropathic arthropathy: Nerve damage from diabetes or another nerve condition results in slow damage to joints. In diabetic people, arthropathy usually affects the foot and ankle. (Arthritis may also be present.)
- Hypertrophic pulmonary osteoarthropathy: The ends of bones in the ankles, knees, wrists, and elbows start to grow abnormally and painfully in an adult. The tips of the fingers become rounded, called clubbing. This form of arthropathy occurs more often in people with lung cancer.
- Hemarthrosis: Bleeding into a joint like the knee can occur after injuries or medical procedures and is a common problem in people with hemophilia.

Arthritis is common, and other arthropathies are uncommon, so in most cases when a doctor says arthropathy, it means arthritis.

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