

## 9. Sore toe joints



**What it means:** Rheumatoid arthritis (RA), a degenerative joint disease, is often first felt in the smaller joints, such as the toes and the knuckles of the hands.

**More clues:** Swelling and stiffness usually accompany the aches. This pain tends to be symmetrical; for example, it happens simultaneously in both big toes or in both index fingers. RA develops more suddenly than degenerative arthritis, and attacks may come and go. Women are almost four times more affected than men.

**What to do:** A full workup is always needed to pinpoint the cause of any joint pain. For RA, there are many medications and therapies that can minimize pain and preserve function, though early diagnosis is important to avoid permanent deformity. (In the feet, the toes can drift to the side.)