

Biologic Medications Good For Treating Rheumatoid Arthritis

Rheumatoid arthritis is a chronic inflammatory illness. It is an autoimmune disease in which the immune system attacks normal tissue components as if they were foreign pathogens. The inflammation associated with rheumatoid arthritis primarily involves the linings (synovium) of the joints. Hands and feet are most often affected. Women suffer from it three times more than men.

There is no known cure for rheumatoid arthritis. The goal of treatment in rheumatoid arthritis is to reduce joint inflammation and pain, maximize joint function, and prevent joint destruction and deformity. Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) are the most commonly used medication that can reduce tissue inflammation, pain and swelling. However, NSAID usage is associated with side-effects such as stomach upset, abdominal pain, ulcers, and even gastrointestinal bleeding. It is now possible to reduce these complications with a new form of anti-inflammatory drugs – the COX-2 inhibitors.

Recent studies have shown that it is possible to block tumor necrosis factor (TNF), a protein that is responsible for rheumatoid joint inflammation. These biological modifiers (TNF-inhibitors) are also frequently used in combination with other anti-rheumatoid drugs. Though these drugs may be expensive, results thus far have shown they are very effective in controlling the symptoms of rheumatoid arthritis. Besides, they may be effective in preventing the progressive joint destruction of rheumatoid arthritis.