

Acute rheumatic fever (ARF)

What is it?

Acute rheumatic fever (ARF) is an illness that can be very severe. It can happen when a skin or throat infection caused by a germ called 'Strep A' isn't treated. It is not common, but you are more likely to get it if you have had it before. It can happen to children, men and women at any age. It affects the heart, joints, skin and brain. Symptoms of acute rheumatic fever will start two-to-three weeks after a Strep A infection. These include:

- Fever and chills
- Joint pain
- Muscle pain and odd movements
- Chest pain
- Skin rash or sores
- Feeling tired

It can be treated with injections every four weeks. Your GP will tell you more about this. If your ARF is not treated, it can damage your heart. Then, it becomes [rheumatic heart disease \(RHD\)](#).

What questions could I ask my doctor?

- How can I stay healthy?*
- What treatment will I need?*
- Should I tell my family if I am sick?*



What will my GP do now?

Your GP will talk to you about your symptoms and health history. They will do tests to diagnose you. If you have ARF, you will be sent to hospital.

What will my GP do in the future?

Your GP will see you each month to help treat your ARF. They may also refer you to a specialist called a cardiologist. They will manage your heart health after having ARF. If your child has ARF, your GP will want to see them every year for a check-up.

What can I do?

If you have ARF, follow the advice of your healthcare team. If you get sick with a skin or throat infection again, you should visit your GP. You should also practise good hygiene. Things like washing your hands and body with clean, soapy water and not sharing utensils when eating helps.

What supports are available?

SWSLHD Infections Diseases Unit

If you are an adult, you may be referred to the SWSLHD Infectious Diseases Unit at Liverpool Hospital.

RHD Australia - Rheumatic fever treatment tracker app

The rheumatic fever treatment tracker app will help you to manage your rheumatic fever and rheumatic heart disease. It is free and can be downloaded to your phone. Visit rhdaustralia.org.au.

Where can I learn more?

- **Healthdirect Australia** - Rheumatic fever: healthdirect.gov.au
- **NSW Health** - Acute rheumatic fever and rheumatic heart disease brochure: health.gov.au