



Living with Rheumatoid Arthritis

heumatoid arthritis is a chronic disease that primarily affects joints. The most common symptoms are joint pains, swelling and stiffness. Rheumatologists will work with you to help ease your symptoms with medication. But you have to learn to manage your RA every day.

Safe Care

Taking care of yourself and staying on top of the disease is a big part of RA treatment. Take your medicine as directed by your Rheumatologist. Try not to skip a dose. Speak to your doctor if you have any side effects.

Even when your pain and stiffness is less of a problem, keep up with your medical appointments. See your doctor periodically. Your rheumatologist will review your treatment plan and make necessary changes to control the disease. Studies show that people with RA who see a rheumatologist several times a year do better.

Exercise

When you have joint pain and stiffness, you may not want to move around. But it would be best if you tried to stay as active as possible. It helps ease your symptoms and prevent longterm problems.

Exercise for rheumatoid arthritis usually includes:

- •Stretching. Stretch when you get started to warm up. Stretch when you're done to cool down.
- •Low-impact aerobic exercise. These are exercises that keep your heart strong without hurting your joints. Walking, riding a bike, and swimming are good choices for people with RA. You may also try a machine like a stationary bike or treadmill.
- •Strengthening. These exercises help keep your muscles strong. You might use resistance bands that gently strengthen your muscles. You can also use lightweights.

Yoga helps boost your balance and flexibility. It may even ease your pain.

Research by the Arthritis Foundation shows that yoga poses, breathing, and relaxation lower joint tenderness and swelling for some people with RA.

If you have a lot of pain when you exercise, stop. Speak to your doctor or therapist before you start again.

Visit Physical or Occupational Therapist

They can help you become more robust and more flexible. Therapists can show you the safest ways to move your body for everyday tasks, like lifting a box, to help protect your joints. They can also teach you exercises to do at home safely. You want to build strength, but you don't want to overdo it as it may trigger pains.



An occupational therapist shows you ways to do specific tasks at home or work. A physical therapist helps keep you moving. No matter which type you choose, it's best to see someone who has experience working with people with arthritis. The medications used for RA are pain killers, DMARDs and Biologics.

Diet

It's always wise to eat a balanced, healthy diet. It helps fight inflammation.

Avoid saturated fat, cholesterol, and sugars.

Your doctor may also recommend:

- •Vitamins or minerals. You may need the extra nutrients.
- No alcohol. Drinking alcohol may be a problem with some medicines for RA.
 - •No smoking as it aggravates RA.

Healthy Weight

Nearly two-thirds of people who have RA are overweight or obese. Getting to a healthier weight can lead to fewer complications and a better chance of remission.

Lower Stress

Dealing with RA can be stressful, but there are many ways to lower your stress level:

- Counselling
- Take time to rest during the day
- •Learn special techniques like yoga and meditation.
- Reach out for support from friends, family, and co-workers.