



Tips for an active life with rheumatoid arthritis



Managing your RA

Rheumatoid arthritis (RA) may affect every part of your life. Fortunately, there may be ways to manage your RA. Treatment may help relieve symptoms and limit joint damage. Medicine is one part of managing your disease. Making healthy lifestyle choices is another important part of managing RA. Your healthcare provider can help you identify changes in your lifestyle that may help you feel better.



Don't just live with the pain

If you still have joint pain and stiffness after you start treatment, talk with your healthcare provider. There may be options that can help reduce the pain even more.



What makes symptoms worse?

You may have times when your RA symptoms get worse. This is called a flare. People can have many different triggers. Triggers are what cause your RA symptoms to flare. **Not all triggers are known, but some common ones you may notice are:**



Infection



Too much physical activity



Lack of sleep



Stress

Keeping a journal may help you identify some of your triggers. Talk with your healthcare provider about your triggers and how you can try to avoid them.

Balance resting and being active

To keep muscles and joints healthy, stay active, but also let your joints rest. Getting enough of both is important. Staying active can help reduce pain and keep your joints flexible. Be careful not to overdo it. Too much activity or too much rest may cause pain and stiffness. Talk to your healthcare provider about how much rest and activity is right for you.



Tips for being active

- Exercise to increase your energy and well-being. Talk with your healthcare provider about exercises that are best for you.
- Make stretching a part of your daily routine.
- Think of activities that may keep your joints flexible, such as swimming or walking.
- Talk to your healthcare provider about seeing a physical therapist. This person can teach you exercises to help reduce pain.



Tips for resting joints

- Take breaks throughout the day to save your energy and protect joints.
- If you feel okay after a short break, try resuming your activity.
- Take a nap for 20 to 30 minutes. This can help boost your energy.
- During a flare, too much rest may make the pain last longer. Try moving your joints around while you're resting.
- Talk to your healthcare provider about using a brace to help rest your joints.

Treating your RA pain

Medicine is an important part of treating pain from RA. Here are some other ideas to discuss with your healthcare provider for reducing pain:

- **Getting a massage** to help relax muscles and reduce the pain.
- **Using a heating pad** or taking a warm shower before starting an activity.
- **Wrapping a bag of ice in a towel** and applying to painful areas for 10 to 20 minutes.



Reduce stress



Having RA may make you feel sad, anxious, or stressed. Being in pain or being unable to do things can cause these feelings. **Stress produces chemicals in the body that may make your RA worse.** So it's important to try to limit stress. Yoga, meditation, or other ways of relaxing may help reduce stress. This may help reduce RA flares.

Are you struggling with daily tasks?

Simple gadgets may make living with RA easier. Consider these:

- ▶ Door knob grips to help open doors
- ▶ Jar openers to help open lids
- ▶ Button-less shirts
- ▶ Zipper pulls
- ▶ Long-handled shoe horns





How does RA affect your life?

List the challenges you face. Then, write down how you deal with them. Talk to your healthcare provider about your challenges. He or she may be able to suggest solutions.

Challenge you face

How you deal with it



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Challenge you face

How you deal with it





Set up a support system

Your family and friends can help in many ways. This can include help with activities in your daily life. Let them know how you are feeling. Tell them how they can help you with specific tasks, especially during a flare. Consider inviting a family member or friend to one of your appointments.



You can also ask your healthcare provider about support groups, including online communities you can join. These groups let you share what you are going through and hear from other people with RA.



Check out these resources
for more information about RA:

Arthritis Foundation

arthritis.org

CreakyJoints®

creakyjoints.org