

Treating Rheumatoid Arthritis

Rheumatoid arthritis, or RA, is a serious illness.

The lining of your joints become inflamed.

Long-term inflammation can lead to joint damage, chronic pain, and loss of function.

RA can't be cured. But early diagnosis and treatment can control symptoms and lessen joint damage.

Medicines are the main treatment for RA.

They can ease symptoms and prevent the disease from getting worse.

Medicines prescribed may include: Disease Modifying Antirheumatic drugs, or DMARDs, Immunosuppressants and Biologic response modifiers.

Make sure to take your medicines as directed. Otherwise, they won't work as well.

And don't stop taking medicines or add medicines or supplements without talking to your healthcare provider first.

"The current treatment that I'm on right now is I take medication once a week and then every five weeks I go for an infusion for medication."

Exercise regularly. Become fit and get more energy through aerobic exercise, such as walking, biking and swimming.

Range of motion and strengthening exercises improve joint mobility and increase muscle strength.

Always check with your healthcare provider before beginning any exercise program.

A physical therapist can plan an exercise program that meets your specific needs.

Ask how cold and heat treatments can make your exercise routine more comfortable.

Choose healthy foods. No diet can cure RA but eating healthy foods will help support your overall health.

Lose weight if needed. If you are overweight, weight loss can help decrease stress on joints. Talk with your healthcare provider if you need help losing weight.

Meet with your healthcare providers regularly.

Tell them if you have side effects from your medicine, or if your joint symptoms are getting worse.

Ask your healthcare provider about bone health. People with RA are at risk for osteoporosis, when bones become weak and brittle. Ask about a screening test for osteoporosis.

Treating Rheumatoid Arthritis

Also talk with your healthcare team if you have feelings of depression and anxiety due to managing RA. Together, you can make a total treatment plan that works for you.

“The communication with the doctors is absolutely key. You have to be honest and open. You have to be transparent.”

Making and following your treatment plan will help limit the effect of RA on your daily life.

“And, you know, it's not okay just to suffer through it. As much as I did to suffer through it. I am so thankful I took the path that I did to get the help that I needed to make sure I can live a normal life.”