

# LIVING WELL WITH RA

## RHEUMATOID ARTHRITIS

Rheumatoid arthritis (RA) can make your joints feel sore and stiff, but there's good news—**treatment and healthy habits can help you feel your best.** RA medications can ease pain and protect your joints, and there are many other ways to care for your body. Finding a healthy balance between activity and rest is important, and having the understanding and support of family and friends can make a big difference. Here are some tips to help you live well with RA:

### EXERCISE AND RA

Gentle exercise can help people with RA feel less joint pain and stiffness. Activities like walking, stretching, swimming, or dancing keep joints healthier and can lift your mood. It is important to go at your own pace, take breaks when you need them, and listen to your body to avoid "over-doing it". Look to family or friends for help so you can stay active in ways that feel good for your body.

#### Exercises that can help RA:

- Walking
- Jogging
- Dancing
- Stretching
- Bike riding
- Yoga
- Gentle weight training

A physical therapist can help you find which exercises are right for you, and can help with particular areas of pain or stiffness.

### FOOD AND RA

Eating healthy is an important part of living well with RA

#### ✔ Eat More of These:

- Fruits and vegetables (fresh, canned, or frozen)
- Whole grains (brown rice, whole wheat bread, corn tortillas)
- Beans
- Nuts
- Olive oil
- Lean meat (chicken, turkey)
- Fish

#### ✘ Eat Less of These:

- Fried foods
- Sugary drinks (like soda, Kool-Aid, Gatorade)
- Sugary foods (like candy, cookies)



RHEUMATOLOGY ACCESS  
EXPANSION INITIATIVE

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Connect with others who are living with arthritis at [creakyjoints.org](https://creakyjoints.org)

## FATIGUE AND RA

Restful sleep can reduce pain and help you stay active!

Fatigue (tiredness) is a common symptom of RA, and it can make it more difficult to do daily tasks such as working, cleaning, cooking, and childcare. Sleep is restorative, and resting your body is an extremely important part of treating RA. Here are some tips:

- ✓ Try to go to bed and wake up at about the same time each day. Most people need about 8 hours of sleep each night, and people with RA may need more.
- ✓ Even if you are sleeping well at night, you may still need to take a nap during the day. Listen to your body and rest when you need to.
- ✓ Don't drink caffeine (coffee, soda) in the afternoon or evening. Some people also find that avoiding alcohol helps them sleep better.
- ✓ For better sleep, avoid bright screens (TV, phone) right before bed



## MENTAL HEALTH AND RA

Feeling sad, worried or anxious are all common and understandable reactions to living with a lifelong condition like RA. It's good to ask for help when you're feeling down or stressed.

**If you are ever feeling overwhelmed by stress, depression, or anxiety, it is important to let your doctor know and to seek help from a mental health professional.**

### Seek out help:

- Talk to a counselor or therapist
- Practice mindfulness and meditation
- Talk to a doctor about medications for depression or anxiety
- Lean on family, friends, and your community for support
- Join a support group (in person or online)

## QUESTIONS PEOPLE ASK

**? I see lots of advertisements for supplements to help joint health. Are any of these worth trying?**

Some supplements, such as turmeric and omega-3, can help reduce pain and stiffness. However, many of the supplements you see advertised don't do much to help with RA, and some can be harmful if they interact with your usual medication. It is best to talk about any supplements you are taking with your doctor to make sure they are safe.

**? What is better for a painful joint, heat or cold?**

Heat (heating pads, jacuzzi, sauna) can help reduce stiffness and cold (ice packs) can help with pain. Try both and see which works best for you!

**? Will exercise damage my joints?**

No. Gentle daily exercises helps to protect your joints and can reduce pain from RA.