10 Helpful Home Hacks for Your RA

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Helpful Home Hacks for RA Sufferers

Rolling out of bed in the morning can be a big hassle when your RA is flaring up, and any task that follows can seem near impossible. That's why we are going to talk about home hacks for RA.

While medication certainly plays a role in your disease management, there are probably several things you could be doing differently to relieve some of the pain, including changing your home life for the better.

From memory aids, clothing, jewelry, and rings for arthritis sufferers, robotic assistants and new ways of thinking, these home hacks for RA are guaranteed to save you energy and improve productivity.

Top Tools to Get You Through Your Day

More mobility aids and gripping devices hit the market each year, and while some will work well for your particular lifestyle, you might find that others are a big waste of money.

Instead of finding out the hard way, consider using devices – some high-tech, some low-tech – that promise a big return on your investment:

- **Food processor**. Chopping vegetables can take a lot of time and energy, which makes food prep (and by extension, healthy eating) difficult during RA flare-ups. Invest in a food processor to get the job done really quickly, or a low-tech food chopper that you operate with the palm of your hand to spare your fingers the pain of holding a knife.
- **Whiteboard.** RA pain, fatigue, and requisite medication can all hamper your thinking, which means you may become forgetful more often. Since you have a lot of things to keep track of, you should have an easy and clear way to organize them. A whiteboard can keep you and your family on top of your medication schedule and serves as a good reference tool in case of emergencies.
- **Robot vacuum cleaner.** Hauling a vacuum around the house is one of the biggest hassles for sore joints. There are new lightweight models of the traditional design out there, but if you are ready to buy a new device, why not take all the work out of it with a robot that moves and cleans all by itself? There are several brands, and some even feature a vacuum and mop combo.
- **Paraffin dip**. Many people with chronic pain find relief with warm, melted paraffin wax, which molds around your hands and feet to soothe inflamed joints. You can buy sets that include everything you need for your wax therapy. You'll get the most benefit when you use it right before bed or as soon as you get up in the morning. Paraffin is also really good for softening your skin, which means it can double as a moisturizer!
- **Rubber bands.** A simple rubber band is pretty versatile, so keep a supply within reach. Wrap a few around your jar lids for better traction, and loop them through zipper pulls to maneuver the small devices much more easily. Include some thick ones and thin ones in your stash, so you have one to suit any gripping task.

- **Spice mix.** Pre-mixing your spices in the kitchen can save you from fidgeting with little bottles, but it can also improve your RA symptoms. Certain spices are believed to help with pain relief and inflammation, especially turmeric, ginger, cayenne, and black pepper. Mix these together in whatever ratio suits your taste, and make a point to incorporate your mixture into more dishes each week.

Whenever you are looking for new household tools or mobility aids, try to shop when your RA is flaring up. It may be more uncomfortable to drag yourself through stores with joint pain and stiffness, but this way you will know for sure what devices will (and will not) work for you when you need them most.

Change Up Your Approach for More Relief

It can be tempting to avoid the outside world altogether when your RA is flaring up, but that is probably not the best plan. After all, there are some obligations that you just can't get out of, and some daily tasks and interactions that must happen. You can, however, learn to handle challenging situations with more comfort and grace.

Use the Strongest Parts of Your Body

For many people, RA targets the hands and wrists most often. Unfortunately, you need your hands for all sorts of things, which can result in a lot of painful strain for your inflamed joints.

Whenever possible, lighten the load on your hands: use your forearms to carry shopping bags and find a backpack with cushioned straps to balance the weight over your back rather than carry a purse on one shoulder.

As for your legs, it is good to find ways to spare your knees the effort of supporting all your body weight. This is where devices like chair pads, electric seat lifts, and raised toilet seats come in handy; they help to gently shift your weight to your major muscle groups (quadriceps, hamstrings, and gluteal muscles) so you can stand up more easily.

Be Tolerant of Others

When insensitive actions or unfair expectations begin to frustrate you, try to put yourself in the other person's shoes.

RA has a host of intrusive symptoms, but they are often invisible to other people. Until you experience the stiffness, soreness and fatigue yourself, it is nearly impossible to imagine how an RA sufferer lives, and that ignorance should be forgiven.

You can help the people around you understand your challenges a bit better by showing them your problems.

For instance, if your fingers and wrists are inflamed, a simple handshake can be a very unpleasant experience, but by reaching out with your palm facing down, you give your acquaintance the opportunity to see the red, swollen joint and adjust their response accordingly.

Lean on the Household

RA brings some limitations that you must learn to accept, but your family and friends can help keep life rolling along as usual.

Dividing up the chores is a good place to begin, but it's also important to be flexible when it comes to your cleaning schedule – if you can learn to live with less than perfect, you will save yourself a load of energy and stress.

In order to conserve even more energy, make any lifting or moving activities a team effort: do not let too many boxes or rubbish build up by using smaller bags and moving them outside more frequently, and call home before returning with groceries, so you have someone ready to help unload the car and put everything away.

Conclusion

Your ability to pace yourself by choosing which activities to include and exclude is perhaps the most important aspect of managing your RA. Remind yourself that you are still in control, and if you feel like you are losing control, it may be time to make some changes.