9 Helpful Mobility Aids for Rheumatoid Arthritis Patients

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Have You Considered Using a Mobility Aid?

Some people with RA may never need a mobility aid, while others rely on them for their day-to-day activities. Others use mobility aids only to help them through the worst of their flares and are able to go on without them when their disease is in remission.

What kind of mobility aids are helpful also vary from person to person. Just because one person with the disease relies on a wheelchair does not mean that a newly diagnosed person should, consequently, expect to be in a wheelchair. It is all very individualistic and dependent on the person and their disease activity.

1. Car Adaptions

Many people who have RA are able to continue driving as normal, but some may have to change things up in order to keep their independence. For some, it is incredibly difficult to operate a stick shift with RA and it may be necessary to change to an automatic transmission. Power steering and central locking may also make it easier for the driver.

2. Parking Permit

Talk to your doctor about getting a special handicapped permit if you have issues walking long distances. This may be a permanent or temporary measure, but will help out tremendously in the long run. This way, you can save yourself the trouble of having to walk great distances when you're out running errands, making things a lot easier on you.

3. Wrist Splints

While they may not seem like a mobility aid, many people with RA need them in order to get around. When RA affects the wrists, it can be very painful to be moving them, so splints can allow the wearer to go about their daily tasks, just with splints on. This may help people accomplish daily errands and other tasks like driving or operating a wheelchair.

4. Cane or a Walker

Those with severe flares or more serious forms of RA may find that using a cane or walker can help take the stress off of their legs or hips by giving them something else to lean on. A cane or a walker is great for help ease pain on hips, knees and other joints in the body, and can be used temporarily of permanently.

Especially during a flare a cane or walker can help give your body a much needed rest. Walkers and canes, however, can prove very challenging for those who suffer from pain in the hands and wrists as well, making it very

difficult to use one and lean on the cane with full force.

However, canes and walkers can be very beneficial for people who have difficulty with their feet and ankles as it can keep them steadier and reduce the risk of a fall. Those whose RA is more severe may prefer a walker with wheels to reduce the strain of having to pick it up over and over again.

5. Mobile Seat

Many people with RA find standing a long time painful or difficult. In order to combat this, a portable seat that fits on the side of a cane or walker can be purchased. This handy little device will allow its owner to have a seat any time they need it, making daily tasks a lot easier to deal with.

6. In-Home Electric Ramps

While living in a one-story house is probably best for those with RA, many people may have purchased a home before their diagnosis or have inherited a house that has stairs.

One way around this is to install an electric ramp in your home that allows you to navigate the stairs quickly and easily. You can simply sit in the chair, turn it on with your finger and it will take you up the stairs.

Many of these in-home electric ramps also have swivel chairs to aid in entering and exiting. Additionally, they are often foldable so that if you are having a good day, or live with other people who would rather take the stairs, it isn't in the way.

7. Crutches

Crutches can be very helpful aids to take the pressure off of knees or feet completely. This is especially useful if one leg or knee is worse off than the other, making it much easier to get around without a severe amount of pain.

8. Portable Basket

A wheeled portable basket is an essential for RA sufferers who live in places where walking is relied upon. It is also great for carrying heavy loads back and forth between the car and home (think big grocery hauls) or at any other time.

These portable baskets can be purchased at most mobility aid stores and are a lifesaver for those who need to carry things around but are unable to.

9. Wheelchair

A wheelchair can be used during a flare to aid in mobility or if the RA has progressed enough to make it extremely difficult to get around. Wheelchairs without motors are easily rented or borrowed at most places, and if the person with RA has a friend or family member than can push them around in it, this is a great alternative to being left out of a long day (such as going sight seeing or to a theme park).

Investing in a wheelchair is a good idea if it seems like there are more bad days than good and the person with RA finds they are a great help. Otherwise, they can be temporarily rented from most mobility aid stores.

Many people may also find that a motorized wheelchair can aid in mobility and independence. With a motorized wheelchair, the person in it can get around however they please without walking and most even contain a little basket for shopping or personal effects.

Motorized wheelchairs can often be rented at grocery stores to aid in big shopping trips, or they can be rented or purchased from mobility aid stores and are really handy for those in severe pain but who do not want to lose their

independence.