Five Healthy Living Tips for People With Rheumatoid Arthritis

by ANNA SCANLON

Five Living With Rheumatoid Arthritis Tips

Living with rheumatoid arthritis (RA) isn't always easy. When I have to explain to someone what living with rheumatoid arthritis is like, I tell them this: one day you may feel fine and pain-free, and the next day you'll feel completely exhausted to the point you can't get out of bed – it's unpredictable.

I've been living with RA for a while now, and I want to share with you my tips for healthy living with RA.

Tips for Eating Healthy With RA

Most of us (with RA or not!) may enjoy a lot of sweets and rich savory foods, however, these foods aren't necessarily the best for controlling arthritis. I'm afraid you'll need to make a diet change if you want to feel your best because by eating certain healthy foods you may find that it will help reduce the pain of RA.

Please note, however, that there is no one way of eating that can magically control or even cure RA, despite the claims of many diet gurus. Instead, there are foods that are recommended for certain properties they contain which can help reduce pain and inflammation. Otherwise, much of your RA diet will be down to experimentation and eating a well-balanced diet.

- **Fish.** Fish is an excellent source protein, which can help maximize your energy levels when you're feeling particularly tired and weak. Salmon, tuna, sardines and other cold-water fish are also high in omega-3 fatty acids, which can help reduce inflammation in your body.
- **Mediterranean foods.** If you're a fan of Greek and Italian food, you're in luck. These meals, which feature vegetables, olive oil and fish, are highly recommended to help reduce inflammation.
- **Nuts.** Nuts, such as walnuts, pine nuts, pistachios, and almonds are a great way to ensure you're getting in some of the best monosaturated fat, which helps fight inflammation.
- **Onions.** While onions may make you cry when you're peeling them, adding them to your diet can help keep inflammation at bay. They can also help by keeping away bad cholesterol and reducing your risk of heart disease.

The Importance of Exercise in RA Management

Exercise may seem near impossible when you have RA, and on some days, especially during a serious flare, it is much better to wait it out until you feel better than to push yourself. However, when you're not flaring, exercise can help stave off the symptoms of RA.

In fact, sitting around too much can only cause you to feel worse and make your joints feel much stiffer, which is why exercise is always in order. And it can help you with your New Year's resolutions of either losing weight or simply living a healthier lifestyle.

Tips for Staying Pain-Free With RA

It’s not easy to exercise when you’re not feeling up to it, so it is important to take a painkiller a couple of hours before you exercise so you’ll feel a bit more up to it.

If you plan to go to the gym around 7 p.m., for example, pop an Advil or Motrin around 5 or 6 p.m. to help ease symptoms. This will make it a lot easier for you to get the gym and do what needs to be done.

Start With Gentle Exercise With RA

If starting an exercise routine is on the cards for your New Year’s resolution, you don’t need to jump in full speed ahead. Instead, be gentle with yourself and your body!

You can start by swimming laps with a kickboard or doing meditative yoga instead of going full power on a treadmill. If you can’t join a gym, you can download plenty of free yoga podcasts or YouTube clips right off the Internet and follow along at home.

You can even just make it a priority to get out more often during the day. This can mean taking the dog for a walk more often or going on a short walk.

While swimming and yoga are fantastic ways of staying fit, weight-bearing exercise is also important to ensure that you don’t develop osteoporosis. Keep this in mind and try to incorporate at least a little bit of walking into your routine.

Try Cardio for RA Weight Loss

If you’re dealing with rheumatoid arthritis and weight gain and looking to lose some weight, you’ll need to up your game a bit. While swimming is fantastic cardio, you can also try biking (either on a stationary bike or around the neighborhood) or using the elliptical machine.

These are great ways to burn fat without putting too much pressure on your joints. It also keeps the ligaments around the joints strong to help support them in times of flare.

Remember, when incorporating healthy eating and exercise, you don’t ever have to go to an extreme. Instead, little changes can mean a lot.