What Can I Do to Keep Working With Rheumatoid Arthritis?

by NEWLIFEOUTLOOK TEAM

What You Need to Know About Employment with RA

Rheumatoid arthritis (RA) is a chronic illness that aggravates the small joints of the fingers, knees, hands and feet. It affects the lining of the joint, causing intense pain and inflammation and can even lead to the destruction of the bone. We will be looking at employment with RA.

It is an autoimmune disease, which means the body treats normal cells as invading cells and attacks itself. The disease can cause pain, fatigue and joint stiffness. While there is no cure for rheumatoid arthritis, it can be managed through different treatment options.

However, rheumatoid arthritis can make daily tasks difficult for those who suffer from it, including finding and keeping a job that a person can complete without wearing and tearing their joints.

Looking for a Job

Working is good for people in general, but especially for people with arthritis. It gives them a sense of purpose and a distraction from the pain they may be feeling because of the arthritis.

To reap the benefits of working, you have to know your limits. You do not want a job that is going to aggravate your RA, so you have to understand what it is that causes flare-ups in the first place.

When looking for a job, you want something that is going to accentuate your good qualities but won't hurt you in the long run.

Create a list of must-haves when looking or interviewing for a job. Would you have to stand for long periods? Would you need flexibility in having to leave for doctor visits? What is it that you need from a job? These types of questions will allow you to better understand your employment needs.

On the Job

In almost any job, there may be something that you are required to do that causes a person with RA a lot of pain, but there are ways to manage it while you are at work so that the tasks can still be completed. Things like typing on a keyboard or using a stapler can cause irritation, which over time, can lead to pain.

In the past, healthcare professionals told patients of RA to avoid doing any activity that may cause pain or irritation of the joints, but they realized that that is not a realistic expectation. Instead, they now direct patients to management techniques.

On the Job

If the pain is at a manageable level, NSAIDS like Ibuprofen or Aleve can help reduce inflammation and pain to ensure you can make it through the workday.

However, if the RA pain is beyond a manageable level, talk to your doctor. They may be able to recommend a rheumatoid arthritis treatment for altering the movements that are causing you the most pain.

There may also be assistive devices that could help you lessen the pain in your joints while at work. Again, consult with your doctor to determine the best course of action for you and your arthritis.

Working at Home

Sometimes, due to RA pain or other issues, working in an office full-time is not the right fit for you. You can easily find jobs online that allow you to work from home, but there are a few things to keep in mind when looking for a job from home.

An ideal job is one with less strict deadlines so that one bad day will not affect your overall job performance. If the job does require strict deadlines, plan so that if something does come up, you can still meet the deadline because you completed the task two or three days before it.

You also want a job that does not require standing or working for long periods. The point of working from home is to give you flexibility and tasks that will be easier to complete with the least amount of pain.

Self-employment is always an option as well and can be a good one. Just be sure to keep a regular schedule to not get complacent. Using a job can help you in your search, but keep an eye out for jobs that say "home-based," "telecommute" or "flexible." Be sure you do your research as some jobs that advertise they are home-based may not be all they seem to be.

Career Continuity with RA

Just because you suffer from rheumatoid arthritis does not mean that you have to quit your job; employment with RA is certainly feasible. Pain can be managed most of the time, and you can make certain accommodations for yourself to allow you to complete the task at hand without experiencing too much pain.