Why RA Self-Care is Important for Staying Involved as a Parent

by ANGELA FINLAY

Parental Involvement With RA

Although discomfort is often concentrated in places like the wrists, fingers and feet, RA affects more than the joints. The inflammation that starts in one spot can blossom into an all-consuming pain that saps energy and muscle strength, leaving you feeling weak and exhausted. In turn, many RA sufferers begin to lag behind their friends and family, and in some cases, may have a difficult time caring for and bonding with their children. Let's take a look at parental involvement with RA.

Luckily, there are solutions. A holistic program of preventative care, good rest habits and smart activity choices can help you to take an active role in your children’s health and interests. Begin by learning to work with your RA symptoms rather than against them.

Take Steps to Relieve Fatigue

Good prevention is the best way to sidestep the exhausting effects of RA. Aim for a balance in all aspects of your daily life for the best rewards:

Adapt Your Daily Schedule to Suit Your Symptoms: Try to make extra time around the challenging activities in your day, like getting out of bed or performing a taxing chore. Stress will impact your physical symptoms, and although it’s difficult to avoid altogether, you can open up some breathing space in your schedule so you don’t feel rushed all the time. Don’t be afraid to call on friends, family or your employer for a bit of help as you make time to cater to your symptoms now, so you don’t get overwhelmed later.

Stay Fit and Nourished: The best way to fight exhaustion is to stay as healthy as possible, which calls for a good diet and exercise regime. Making healthy meals with anti-inflammatory foods is a great opportunity to interact, teach and collaborate with your children – the kitchen is a good space for creativity and conversation. The same goes for exercise: if you can rally the family together for an evening stroll, you’ll be able to combine your important muscle maintenance with some family time.

Rest the Right Way: Learn to listen to your body, and respond immediately when flare-ups hit. Permit yourself to really relax at regular intervals, since soldiering through the pain will only lead to more inflammation, exhaustion, and exclusion.

Sleep also counts as rest, so work to improve your sleep quality: use heat packs for physical comfort, try chamomile tea before bed, and invest in a high-quality mattress and pillow that are perfect for your body and your sleep style. The more efficiently you can use your rest time, the more time and energy you can devote to every other activity in your day.

Find Good Distractions

Sometimes, a clever distraction can be the best way to build parental involvement and connect with your kids and forget about your symptoms. Find games and puzzles to keep your mind active and engage your children, and look out for drop-in exhibitions and events around the community. Focus on activities that don’t require too much effort or dexterity on your part, but allow your kids to get in on the action.

Schedule regular time for these things, but keep each occasion fairly short to conserve some energy. It can be difficult for parents to put their interests first, but when you suffer from RA, you need to learn to take care of yourself well to play a bigger role in your children’s lives.