9 Tips for Cleaning With Rheumatoid Arthritis

by LANA BARHUM

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Rheumatoid arthritis (RA) pain can make cleaning your house harder, and that can leave you frustrated. You may think having a clean home and managing RA isn't realistic, but it can be possible with some simple strategies.

There are many strategies you can use to help you keep your home clean while dealing with RA pain and fatigue.

1. Set a Schedule

You shouldn't try to do everything all in one day. Instead, you should plan to take on one major household task every day.

If you miss a day, either move everything back a day or turn one big job into several small ones and include those tasks with those for the upcoming days.

For example, if you miss laundry day, do one load the next day, save another for the following day, and so on, or if you couldn't clean the bathroom today, clean the tub one day, the toilet the next, the floor the day after and so on.

Try to resist the urge to catch up on a major task while you have another major one to complete.

2. Pace Yourself

Don't rush through tasks because the day didn't go as you planned or because someone is visiting. When you rush, you will quickly tire yourself out quickly or increase the chance of a fall or injury.

And it is okay to take breaks, especially if you find yourself fatigued and hurting. Tasks such as sweeping and mopping can be broken down, so it is okay to take a break after the first task, and then after getting some rest, taking on the next one.

If you feel like you have reached your limit for the day, don't stress. After all, the work will still be there tomorrow, and nothing is more important than your health.

3. Keep Supplies Easily Accessible

There is no reason to have to drag supplies from one room to another, especially when struggling with pain and fatigue.

For example, if you live in a two-story home, keep a complete set of cleaning supplies and tools on each floor, so you aren't lugging stuff. Or keep laundry hampers in bathrooms or bedrooms, rather than in your laundry room,

and take those to the laundry room on laundry day.

It is also a good idea to keep cleaning supplies in bathrooms because that is where they are most used, and so you are not going back and forth retrieving supplies.

4. Prioritize High Traffic Areas

As you clean each room, prioritize the parts of each room that get the most attention. For example, if you are cleaning the kitchen, that's the counter, sink and stove top, or in the bathroom, it would be the toilet and sink.

That way if you feel tired, at least the worst of the job is over. Further, these are the areas you can focus on wiping up daily, so jobs are smaller when cleaning the entire space.

5. Clean Messes Quickly

If you wait until a stain has set or clutter adds up, you will end up doing more work later. It is easier to wipe up a fresh spill than leaving it to dry and get sticky and must be scrubbed off.

It is a good idea to keep cleaning wipes in bathrooms and the kitchen for quick cleanups.

6. Contain the Clutter

Small areas of clutter can quickly become big ones if they are not managed. Pay attention to the places in your home that can become clutter spots, such as the dining room table.

Put away shoes and jackets in a designated area as soon as you walk in the door. Designate an area for your keys and throw away junk mail daily.

7. Get Organized

Less stuff means less stuff to care for and clean. You probably don't need all those knickknacks crowding up your living room, or all those dishes you never use.

Stuff is nice, but not necessary, and it needs care. Try to keep your closets, drawers, cabinets, and tabletops and other surfaces as bare as possible.

8. Use the Right Tools

There are plenty of tools that can make cleaning easier. If you can afford a robotic vacuum cleaner, that is one less task you will have to do.

Other helpful and less expensive tools include:

- Swifter dusters, sweepers, and mops
- Long handled dustpans
- Steam mops
- Food scrapers for easy cleaning of pots and pans
- Long handled shower and toilet brushes

9. Ask for Help

If you have other people living in your home, they make messes too, so they should help with cleaning up. Even young children can help, as can teens and other adults.

When it comes to children’s rooms, especially older ones, they should be cleaning their own rooms. If they are not keeping up, shut the door, and don’t make the mess your problem.

And it is okay to ask for help from other family members, such as your mom, sister or cousin. You can always repay them in another way; for example, with a gift card for dinner.

Get past your embarrassment and ask for help.

If you can afford to pay for help, consider a maid service once a week or a couple of times a month. As for the outside of your home, maybe locate a local youth group to help with yard work or to shovel snow to avoid professional landscaping costs.

The Bottom Line...

Doing too much with RA can do more harm than good.

Don’t cram all your household chores into one day. Learn to prioritize and schedule them throughout the week.

It is also important to take breaks. Last, remember that you can ask for help.

It is likely you don’t need help every day, but there will be days where you are feeling tired, in pain and/or overwhelmed. Those are the days where it a helping hand is warranted.