Creative Ways to Wear Rings With Rheumatoid Arthritis

by LANA BARHUM

Wearing Rings With Arthritis

Rheumatoid arthritis (RA) affects every single joint in your body, including your hands and fingers. Pain and swelling in your hands and fingers can be frustrating if you enjoy wearing rings or would like to continue to wear a wedding or favorite ring.

You are probably wondering what options you have when RA affects your finger joints. Are there any alternative options or is it time to forgo the ring wearing?

When RA Affects Finger Joints

Research from VU University Medical Centre, Amsterdam, The Netherlands, finds that up to 94% of people with RA have hand and wrist symptoms starting as early as two years of living with RA.

Additional research shows that many people with RA have significant finger joint space narrowing.

Joint space narrowing is the space between the bones of your joints. Space narrowing is indicative of RA or other arthritic condition, and depending on the amount of spacing, it may also indicate worsening RA.

People who have hand and finger symptoms with RA may experience some specific situations:

- Hand and finger pain
- Swelling and stiffness of the hands and fingers
- Numbing and tingling in one or both hands and one or more of the finger joints
- Misshapen finger joints
- Hand and finger pain, numbness, swelling and stiffness upon waking and for up to an hour upon waking

Managing Hand and Finger Symptoms

You can ease hand and finger swelling, stiffness and pain with exercises that make these joints more flexible.

Try squeezing a soft foam ball a few times, and then relaxing your hand muscles. You may want to try this exercise several times daily.

You might consider talking to a physical therapist about further exercises to help reduce pain, swelling, and stiffness in your hands and fingers. A therapist can also recommend hand and/or finger splints to take pressure off joints during flares, and help to relieve swelling and stiffness.

There are plenty of gadgets and devices that make it easier to perform everyday tasks and put less pressure on finger and hand joints. Some gadgets that put less pressure on your fingers are:

- Foam padding for pencils and pens that you can find at many office supply stores
- Hook and loop fasteners for clothing
- Doorknob accessories that make turning doorknobs easier
- Lamp switches that require a soft touch, rather than twisting a small knob

You can use a heating pad or warm towel to ease pain and stiffness in hands and fingers – especially first thing in the morning. Cold compresses can help with swelling, and you can place an ice pack on the painful joints for 10 to 15 minutes.

You can switch between hot and cold therapy. It is possible one may work better than the other to bring down swelling and stiffness.

Occupational therapists can recommend compression gloves to help ease finger and hand symptoms for people with RA. These can also make it easier to perform daily activities.

What Are Your Ring Wearing Options?

You may think your ring wearing days are behind you, especially if your rings no longer fit or if you have had to have a ring cut off due to swelling. But you do have some alternative options.

Adjustable Shrank Rings

Adjustable and expandable rings are a great option for people with swollen fingers. And if you are worried about a ring like this coming loose during activity and or while sleeping, most are well-made and reliable.

Many jewelers offer a custom service and will professionally create an adjustable ring just for you. They can also update the rings you already have with shanks, or locking claps, which allow rings to open for easy removal and adjustment.

You can even find wedding bands and engagement rings that are adjustable, or you can take the ones you already have in for adjustment. Just make sure you do your research, as not every jeweler is an expert at turning your ring into an expandable/adjustable one.

There are different types of shrank and clasp options to decide on in case you find one less attractive than other or if you feel one would aggravate your finger symptoms.

Silver Ring Splints

Ring splints are both decorative and therapeutic, and there are different design options to choose from. These rings are either made of high-quality silver or a tough, thin thermoplastic.

The oval-8 shape is made of two joined ovals that cover the lower part (or upper) of your finger and the top of your knuckle. The splint is designed to relieve pain caused by movement.

Ring splints are believed to prevent deformity because they keep fingers in their natural position. They also control the motion of the joint naturally and normally.

One 2009 study of Southampton University, Southampton, United Kingdom, found that RA patients wearing silver ring splints daily for a period of 18 months were showing increased finger strength and improved hand dexterity (skill/movement).

Wearing Your Ring as a Necklace

If you decide you do not want your favorite ring altered, you don’t have to wear it on your finger.

You could put your ring around your neck as a necklace. And they do make necklaces with ring holders, so you don’t have to worry about it coming loose and getting lost.

Wearing Your Ring as a Bracelet

A bracelet will also eliminate the issue of wearing a ring on a swollen hand. Just make sure the ring is not loose or dangling to avoid getting caught in something or getting lost while working or performing daily activities.

The Bottom Line

While wearing rings with arthritic fingers, there are still some creative ways for you to continue wearing them.

Of course, it is important to manage RA hand and finger symptoms, but when all else fails, you can get resourceful by updating old rings with adjusters, buying new ones that adjust and expand, trying a therapeutic ring split, or wearing a favorite ring in a necklace or bracelet.

By being creative, you won’t have to forgo wearing favorite and important rings.