

1.5 million

Approximately 1.5 million people in the United States have RA, and there are a number of resources available to everyone!

Get the Facts on Rheumatoid Arthritis

Rheumatoid arthritis, also known as RA, is an example of an **autoimmune disease**. In autoimmune diseases, the immune system attacks healthy body tissues and cells, which causes inflammation (e.g., pain, swelling, redness) and damage to the body (e.g., muscles, joints, or bones). In RA, the immune system mistakenly attacks the lining of the joints.¹ The exact cause of RA is unknown; however, many genetic and environmental factors appear to be involved.²

Signs and Symptoms of RA

Signs and symptoms of RA will vary for each person. They can also change over the course of the condition. Listed below are some common signs and symptoms individuals report:^{2,3}



FEVER

A fever, usually low grade, that may occur frequently or infrequently⁴



FATIGUE (FEELING TIRED)

Chronic fatigue is often associated with RA⁴



TENDER OR WARM SWOLLEN JOINTS

Joint pain, soreness, and/or swelling can limit the mobility of RA patients²



WEIGHT LOSS

Losing weight, which may result from an inability to meet nutritional needs⁵



JOINT STIFFNESS

Often worst in the morning or after prolonged periods of inactivity²

Rheumatoid Arthritis Flares

When symptoms come on suddenly, this may be referred to as a “flare.” Flares may be characterized by a single symptom or any group of symptoms.²

What causes a flare?

RA flares may be triggered by environmental factors. These factors may include: stress, weather/temperature changes, overexertion, poor sleep, or infection.^{3,6}

What to do when a flare occurs:

When a flare occurs, the individual affected is encouraged to see their doctor to determine if any immediate steps must be taken.

If you can't fly, then run, if you can't run then walk, if you can't walk then crawl, but whatever you do, you have to keep moving forward.

Martin Luther King, Jr.



References: 1. Arthritis Foundation. What is Rheumatoid Arthritis. Arthritis Foundation. <https://www.arthritis.org/about-arthritis/types/rheumatoid-arthritis/what-is-rheumatoid-arthritis.php>. Accessed September 28 2018. 2. Mayo Clinic. Rheumatoid Arthritis. Mayo Clinic. <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/rheumatoid-arthritis/symptoms-causes/syc-20353648>. Accessed March 15 2019. 3. Watson S. Understanding RA Flares. Arthritis Foundation. <https://www.arthritis.org/living-with-arthritis/pain-management/flares/ra-flare-up-severity.php>. Updated February 2016. Accessed March 15 2019. 4. Ezerioha M. How do you diagnose Rheumatoid Arthritis. Rheumatoid Arthritis Support Network. <https://www.rheumatoidarthritis.org/ra/symptoms/>. Published October 2018. Accessed March 13 2019. 5. Koch C. Nutrition & Rheumatoid Arthritis. Johns Hopkins. <https://www.hopkinsarthritis.org/patient-corner/disease-management/rheumatoid-arthritis-nutrition/>. Published May 2015. Accessed March 13 2019. 6. Arthritis Foundation. Weather and Arthritis 2019. Arthritis Foundation. <https://www.arthritis.org/living-with-arthritis/tools-resources/weather/>. Accessed March 15 2019.



Treating RA and RA Flares

There is no cure for rheumatoid arthritis, but certain treatment may reduce symptoms and prevent permanent damage to the body.

Treatment for RA is different for every person. Individuals should talk to their doctor to determine which treatment(s) may be right for them!

Different treatments for RA may include:^{7,8}

- ◆ Medications
- ◆ Physical therapy
- ◆ Lifestyle changes
- ◆ Chiropractic treatment
- ◆ Surgery

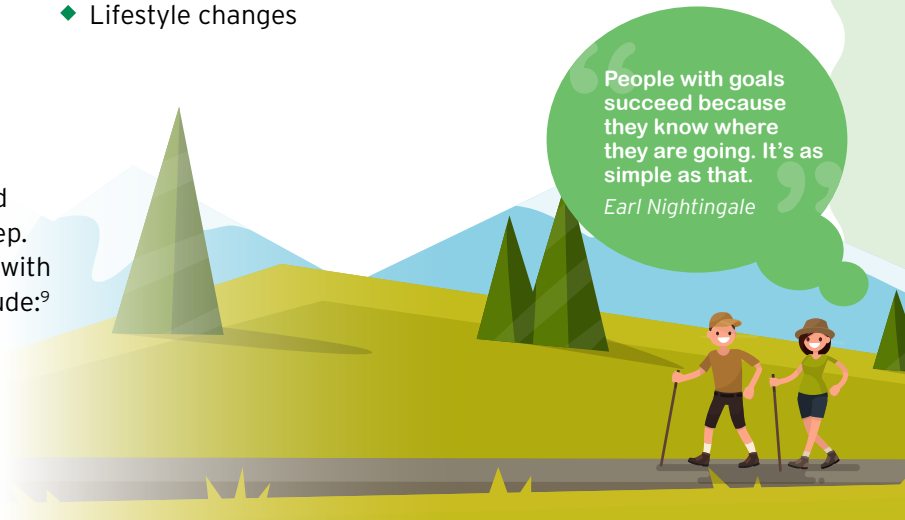
Goals of Rheumatoid Arthritis Treatment

It is important to understand the goals of your individualized RA treatment plan. Identifying and keeping track of treatment goals is a key first step. Individuals should discuss their treatment goals with their doctor. Some RA treatment goals may include:⁹

- Reducing inflammation
- Preventing further or permanent damage
- Managing symptoms

People with goals succeed because they know where they are going. It's as simple as that.

Earl Nightingale



Self-Care and RA

Coping with RA can be overwhelming at times. Sometimes it can make the individual feel sad, angry, or isolated. Practicing proper self-care can help and is important for both your mental and physical well-being. Some ideas for self-care may include:¹⁰

- ◆ Staying connected with friends/family
- ◆ Engaging in activities you enjoy
- ◆ Seeking humorous and upbeat entertainment
- ◆ Setting aside leisure time (eg, reading a book, going to the spa, listening to a podcast)
- ◆ Investing in a hobby
- ◆ Seeking quiet through meditation and/or prayer
- ◆ Eating healthy meals
- ◆ Working with your healthcare provider to develop an exercise program that's right for you

More Information, Support, and Educational Resources

This list includes helpful websites and organizations that provide information about rheumatoid arthritis, support groups, and other RA resources!

- ◆ **Arthritis Foundation**
www.arthritis.org
- ◆ **American College of Rheumatology**
www.rheumatology.org/I-Am-A/Patient-Caregiver
- ◆ **CDC Website-Rheumatoid Arthritis Information**
www.cdc.gov/arthritis/basics/rheumatoid-arthritis.html



References: 7. Mayo Clinic. Rheumatoid Arthritis. Mayo Clinic. <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/rheumatoid-arthritis/diagnosis-treatment/drc-20353653>. Accessed March 15 2019. 8. Sayre C. How chiropractors can help arthritis pain. Arthritis Foundation <https://www.arthritis.org/living-with-arthritis/treatments/natural/other-therapies/chiropractic-medicine.php>. Accessed March 15 2019. 9. Arthritis Foundation. Rheumatoid Arthritis Treatment. Arthritis Foundation. <https://www.arthritis.org/about-arthritis/types/rheumatoid-arthritis/treatment.php>. Accessed March 15 2019. 10. American Autoimmune. Self-Care for Autoimmune Disease Patients. American Autoimmune. <https://www.aarda.org/self-care/>. Published September 2018. Accessed March 15 2019.