

RA, YOUR WAY

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Managing rheumatoid arthritis (RA) is deeply personal. RA affects everyone's lives differently. The journey to take control of your RA is also different for each person. This resource has been designed to help you to live your way with RA.

Your relationship with RA

Having an understanding of RA can help you to feel more in control. With a greater understanding of RA, you can be empowered to make changes to better manage your symptoms.

If you don't know where to start learning more about RA, here are a few places that can help:

- Speak to a healthcare professional - your pharmacist, GP or rheumatologist.
- Visit reputable online sources, such as patient advocacy groups like Musculoskeletal Health Australia.
- Meet others with RA on online forums or community social media pages.

RA, your way doesn't mean you have to go it alone. Get information and support from reputable sources.

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There's a whole community online out there, which is really awesome. It's really cool to collaborate with people. They not only get what you're going through, but support you and give you tips and tricks as well, especially with flares and doctors appointments.

Mikayla, lives with RA

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Working together with your rheumatologist

Having knowledge about RA and the confidence to ask your rheumatologist questions, will help you become more involved in decisions about how your RA is managed.

- Spend time thinking about your personal, treatment and wellbeing goals and share these with your rheumatologist. By setting a clear treatment target, and regularly measuring how active your RA is, you and your doctor can decide how to adjust your treatment if you haven't reached your goal after a certain time.
- Don't be afraid to ask if remission is a possible treatment goal for you. Not everyone living with RA will reach remission. If you have had RA for a long time, low disease activity may be an alternative goal.

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The wonderful thing with speaking to a rheumatologist is they can also speak to your distress. They understand that this is a constantly evolving condition, and the care of it is constantly evolving too.

Andrea, lives with RA

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Making the most of your RA appointment

Whether your symptoms are the same, better, or worse, track them and describe them the best you can to your rheumatologist.

- Write down your questions in advance.
- Track your symptoms or noticeable changes on your phone or in a diary. This could include swelling or pain in your joints or other body parts, or any changes that have impacted your daily activities, including adjustments you have made to keep active.
- Consider bringing a friend or family member to help you remember what's discussed, or record your appointment with your consultant's permission.
- Talk to your rheumatologist about what you want to achieve from your treatment plan and agree on short and long-term goals.
- Don't forget to ask if your treatment plan is on track. The best management plan for RA is one that's tailored to you and your goals.

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I use my notes app on my phone religiously for health things. So, before I go, I make a summary of what's happened in the last three months. Such as symptom changes, medication interactions, side effects or any new goals.

Mikayla, lives with RA

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Living your way with RA

The physical symptoms you experience often have a direct impact on how you feel emotionally. Living with RA can be unpredictable and the ups and downs difficult to deal with.

- Prioritise rest and listen to your body. You know your RA better than anyone, so it's important to stop or adjust activities based on how you're feeling.
- Reach out to family, friends and peer support groups. They can make all the difference in how you cope with pain and other symptoms.
- Make small modifications to how you do things - RA doesn't have to change all aspects of your life. Speak to your rheumatologist or your occupational therapist to see if they have any suggestions or examples of aids that can support you.
- If you are struggling emotionally, you don't need to manage it by yourself, reach out to a healthcare professional for support. For mental health support contact Beyond Blue on 1300 22 4636 or Lifeline on 13 11 14.

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Living with RA can look like making tiny little modifications that make a big difference to you. That could be something like, sitting quietly at certain times of the day where you're not running around and doing things. For me, I have a home gym which is my hand gym, and that's exercising with hand putty.

Andrea, lives with RA

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This information guide is for people with rheumatoid arthritis (RA) and has been informed by patient experiences. For any questions about RA and management speak to your rheumatologist.

For more tips and advice about having meaningful conversations with your rheumatologist, visit <https://www.talkoverra.com/au/en.html>

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