

**Managing  
Inflammatory  
Arthritis**

# What to Discuss with Your Health Care Team



## Introduction

# What to Discuss with Your Health Care Team

This tool has been created with input from patients to provide you with a list of potential topics you could discuss at your next appointment.

### Why?

*“Patients who learn about their treatment program and talk to their health care team about it tend to report fewer symptoms, including less pain and greater mobility.”*

— The Arthritis Society

### Setting goals with your health care team

You can use this tool to help you understand all types of goals related to your arthritis management. Sharing what you write in this tool with your health care team will help you work together to effectively manage and treat your inflammatory arthritis. The next few sections will help you to map out your goals.

**Inflammatory arthritis can cause permanent joint damage when it's not controlled. So even if you're feeling better always take your medication(s) and discuss any changes in your health with your health care team.**

## Your Appointment



# What to Discuss with Your Health Care Team

Throughout this guide, you will find a list of potential topics to be discussed with your health care team, such as:

- **Lifestyle and Personal Goals**

- Exercise
- Relationships
- Work, education and general interest
- Nutrition
- Travelling

- **Clinical Goals**

- Physical health questions
- Mental health questions
- Injection goals
- Ongoing inflammatory arthritis management

Use this tool for your next appointment based on what you feel is the most important to discuss with your health care team.

- Print and complete the sections that are a priority for you to discuss
- Keep a record of your goals and your medications so you can track your progress over time
- Include your own notes and questions
- Write down any requests or questions you have about referrals and resources
- Make sure you speak up and advocate for yourself

### Overview of topics you can discuss with your health care team

**Lifestyle/personal goals** are those you want to achieve in your life. For example, you may wish to finish a degree or travel, or maybe you want to participate in a walk or a run. It's important for you to let your health care team know what goals you have set for yourself so that they can help you meet them. Later in this guide there will be a section of personal goals for you to consider along with the following questions:

**Clinical goals** are those that your rheumatologist and health care team set and relate specifically to the physical symptoms of your disease. For example, a clinical goal could be to decrease inflammation in your joints by your next appointment, or a very low disease activity could be another clinical goal. The chart that your health care team keeps tracks your clinical progress at each appointment, and helps them determine how well your inflammatory arthritis is being managed. At each appointment your team will assess your physical health. If you have concerns, you can discuss your mental health with them too.

- Have you made any progress in reaching your objectives since your last appointment?
- Would you benefit from additional support/services to help you meet your personal objectives?
- Are your personal goals realistic or do you need to adapt them because of your arthritis?

### Physical health

- Level and/or frequency of pain and stiffness
- Mobility
- Flares
- Management of daily tasks
- Other

### Mental health

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Communication
- Lack of support, feeling overwhelmed
- Other

### Review your clinical goals

Your health care team will examine your physical symptoms to decide if additional/different treatment is required. Talk to your health care team about your medications, and ask whether a change in the dose and/or medication would be beneficial to you. Also ensure that:

- You understand your current disease state, the clinical or treatment objective that's been set, and the steps necessary to meet that goal
- Your clinical goals support your personal goal(s)
- You get referrals to other health care professionals, if needed

### Appointment check points

You may not have time to discuss everything on your list, but you should leave your appointment feeling that:

- You understand your current disease activity level, clinical goal(s), and any changes since your last appointment
- You shared any information, concerns or questions that you had about your disease/treatment/goals with your health care team
- You have a prescription renewal and/or enough medication(s) to last until your next appointment, and understand how to take it, if applicable
- You know where or who you can turn to for more help (nurse, website, patient support group, etc.)

**Print sections that are important to you and take them to your next appointment. Review the “Making the Most Out of Your Appointment” document for more information on how to get ready for your appointment.**