

Inflammatory Arthritis Education Series

Lifestyle Management

This program has been reviewed and endorsed by



Canadian Arthritis
Patient Alliance

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*While this initiative was made with support
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all content was developed independently by
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Objectives

By the end of the session, you will:

- Understand how arthritis can affect certain parts of your lifestyle, including nutrition, exercise, sexuality and recreation
- Learn strategies to minimize the impact your arthritis has on these aspects of your lifestyle
- Understand how certain lifestyle behaviours can affect your arthritis

Arthritis affects your life

- Remember that arthritis can affect all aspects of your life, not just you physically
- Although a lot about your arthritis is not in your control, one way to be in control of arthritis is to make informed choices about your lifestyle

Lifestyle considerations

1. Healthy eating
2. Exercise
3. Sexuality
4. Family planning, conceiving, and risk
5. Leisure activities
6. Smoking cessation
7. Alcohol use

Healthy eating & body weight and Exercise

Healthy eating & body weight

- Healthy eating and weight management are discussed in detail in another module in this series called “Healthy Eating and Body Weight”

Exercise

- Exercise is discussed in detail in another module in this series called “Exercise and Arthritis”

Sexuality

Sexuality

Sexuality:

- Can be a concern for people with arthritis of all ages
- Includes your interest and ability to enjoy sex with your partner and your ability to have children
- Can be difficult to talk about

How arthritis may affect your sexuality

- Arthritis may create both physical and psychological issues related to sexuality
- Pain, fatigue and limited joint movement can affect your sexual relationship
- You may have a decreased sexual drive
- Women may have vaginal dryness due to various reasons, such as a condition called Sjögren's syndrome, menopause or aging
- Men may have erectile dysfunction due to arthritis, medications, fatigue, age, mood or self-esteem
- Your self-image and self-esteem may change with your diagnosis

Intimacy and emotions

Anything that affects your mood or feeling of well-being can influence your desire for or enjoyment of sex

- Mood, fatigue, pain, as well as changes to body image, can dampen desire

Talking openly with your partner may be helpful so they can understand:

- Any issues with self-esteem and self-image and how arthritis affects them
- Your level of pain and how it affects you
- How you both feel about any physical issues you may have

Intimacy and emotions: Dealing with change

Feeling sexual has a lot to do with how you feel about yourself and your body

Accepting that your body may have gone through some changes is a first step

Continuing to exercise can also help boost your confidence

Look at new ways to adapt activities

You might not be able to be as physical or intimate as you were before developing arthritis, but you can find new ways to adapt your activities

Intimacy and practical considerations

Sex might not be the same as before you had arthritis, but it is still possible

You may need to plan ahead and take more into consideration than before you had arthritis

- The right time, mood, light, etc.
- Choose the time of day when you feel the least discomfort

If possible, before intercourse think about:

- Timing your pain relievers to be at maximum effect
- Having a warm bath/gentle massage/ice to relax feel more mobile and reduce pain/inflammation
- Lubrication if you have vaginal dryness

Intimacy and practical considerations

Adapt sexual positions:

- To help mechanical problems and for comfort
- Maybe your partner will be more active than you
- See The Arthritis Society's *Intimacy & Arthritis* booklet

Use other methods of stimulation:

- Manual/oral stimulation
- With/without devices

Consider medications, sex therapy, treatments for erectile dysfunction

Intimacy and physical considerations

Surgery

- Hip replacement and other surgical procedures can restore ability to engage in intercourse
- Sexual activities can resume about 6 weeks after hip replacement – but speak to your doctor about this
- With a hip replacement, you may need to take some care with movements as some positions may increase risk of dislocating a new joint

Family planning, conceiving, and risk

Family planning, conceiving, and risk

Inflammatory Arthritis
and/or its treatment
may impact:

- Ability to conceive
- Ability to carry pregnancy to term
- Risk of fetal abnormalities
- Risk of passing on arthritis to your child
- Ability to look after, breastfeed, or raise a child

Consult your
rheumatologist and
obstetrician before
trying to conceive or if
you become pregnant

- Changes may be required to your medications to prevent birth defects (*e.g.*, methotrexate)

Family planning, conceiving, and risk

- It is possible that some women will experience fertility problems unrelated to arthritis, possibly due to medications being taken
- As a general rule, medications are best avoided during pregnancy
 - Not all medications are harmful to the fetus and some can be taken regularly if needed
 - It is important to work with your doctor prior to getting pregnant to taper off any harmful medications and develop a plan to manage the arthritis during pregnancy

Arthritis and pregnancy

- About 70% of women with RA experience an improvement in joint symptoms beginning in the second trimester and lasting until about 6 weeks after delivery
- Women with AS or PSA who become pregnant generally do not see an improvement in joint symptoms
- Last trimester can be painful due to stress on lower back and supporting joints
- Generally there are no effects of arthritis on the child
 - The chance that your child will develop inflammatory arthritis is low

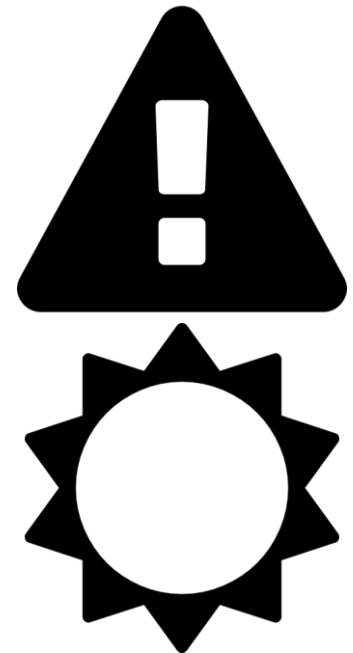
Leisure activities

Leisure activities: travel

Consideration	Tip
Pack light	Light-weight luggage with wheels to decrease the load
Review needed medications	Discuss with rheumatologist, family doctor or pharmacist what you will need (e.g. travel letter, extra prescription), how to store medications or travel with them & any special requests
Remember your routine	Continue to exercise and ice to ensure you're taking care of yourself while you're away
Research your hotel	Before you go, make sure they can accommodate any special requests you may have
Plan your itinerary	So you can take breaks and to ensure you are not "overdoing it"
Your carry-on bag	Should contain assistive devices, medications, syringes & prescriptions, travel letter for medications

Leisure activities: sun safety

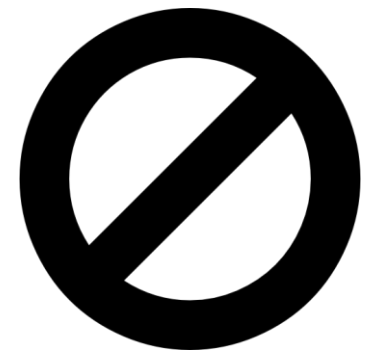
- Some sun exposure (15 to 20 minutes) is important for your body to make vitamin D and to help you adjust to any time differences you experience
- Many inflammatory arthritis medications list sun sensitivity as a possible side effect, so:
 - Avoid the sun between 10 am and 2 pm
 - Wear protective clothing (long sleeves and hat), as well as lotion of SPF30 when out in the sun



Stopping smoking

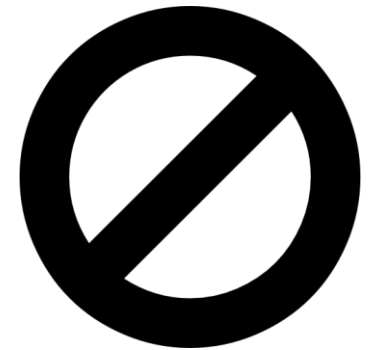
Smoking cessation

- Cigarettes contain many toxins that have been demonstrated to increase inflammation in the body
- Research shows that people who smoke are at risk of developing RA, and those with RA who continue to smoke may have more severe disease
- Smoking may increase the risk of developing complications of inflammatory arthritis, including lung disease



Smoking cessation

- Chemicals in cigarette smoke may interfere with the benefits of some arthritis medications
- Smoking may worsen intolerance to some arthritis medication, especially stomach upset
- Contact the Canadian Lung Association at www.lung.ca for strategies to quit smoking



Alcohol use

Alcohol use

- For those that enjoy alcohol, knowledge of limitations and moderation is key
- Discuss the impact of alcohol use on your new medications with your rheumatologist or pharmacist
- Discuss with your family doctor or rheumatologist any concerns you may have (*i.e.*, impact of alcohol consumption)

Key messages

- Arthritis can affect many aspects of your life, but you can still do things that are important to you
- Consider new ways to maintain healthy sexual relationships
- Work with your doctors to develop a plan when considering pregnancy
- Plan ahead for travel
- Use sun protection
- Do not smoke
- Use alcohol moderately

Resources

Arthritis Consumer Experts

www.jointhealth.org

The Arthritis Foundation

www.arthritis.org

The Arthritis Society

www.arthritis.ca

Canadian Arthritis Patient Alliance

www.arthritispatient.ca

Canadian Psoriasis Network

www.cpn-rcp.com

Canadian Spondylitis Association

www.spondylitis.ca

Rheuminfo

www.rheuminfo.com

Canadian Medical Association

www.cma.ca

Canadian Nurses Association

www.cna-nurses.ca/cna

Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists

www.caot.ca

Canadian Physiotherapy Association

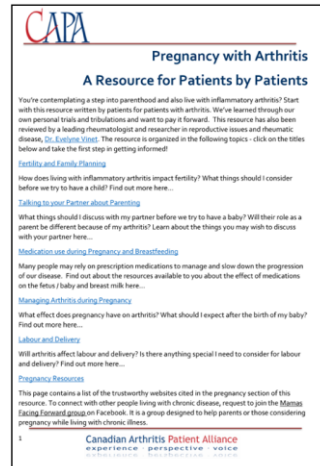
www.thesehands.ca

Dietitians of Canada

www.dietitians.ca

Resources

- Health Canada – Canada’s Food Guide: <https://food-guide.canada.ca/en/>
- Health Canada’s Guide to Sexual Health and Promotion: www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/sex/index-eng.php
- Sexuality and U (Society of Obstetricians & Gynecologists of Canada): www.sexualityandu.ca
- Canadian Lung Association: www.lung.ca
- *Canadian Arthritis Patient Alliance’s Pregnancy and Parenting with Arthritis Resources:* <http://arthritispatient.ca/pregnancy-and-parenting-with-arthritis-a-resource-for-patients-by-patients/>



CAPA
Pregnancy with Arthritis
A Resource for Patients by Patients

You're contemplating a step into parenthood and also live with inflammatory arthritis? Start with this resource written by patients for patients with arthritis. We've learned through our own personal trials and tribulations and want to pay it forward. This resource has also been reviewed by a leading rheumatologist and researcher in reproductive issues and rheumatic disease, [Dr. Catherine Esdaile](#). The resource is organized in the following topics - click on the titles below and take the first step in getting informed!

[Fertility and Family Planning](#)

How does living with inflammatory arthritis impact fertility? What things should I consider before we try to have a child? Find out more here...

[Talking to your Partner about Parenting](#)

What things should I discuss with my partner before we try to have a baby? Will their role as a parent be different because of my arthritis? Learn about the things you may wish to discuss with your partner here...

[Medication use during Pregnancy and Breastfeeding](#)

Many people may rely on prescription medications to manage and slow down the progression of our disease. Find out about the resources available to you about the effect of medications on the fetus / baby and breast milk here...

[Managing Arthritis during Pregnancy](#)

What effect does pregnancy have on arthritis? What should I expect after the birth of my baby? Find out more here...

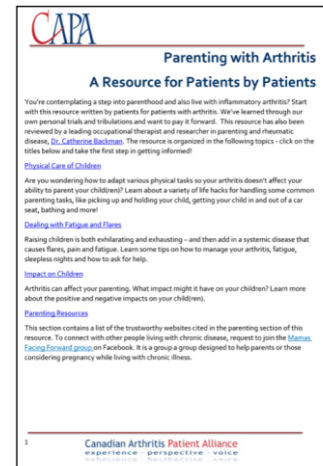
[Labour and Delivery](#)

Will arthritis affect labour and delivery? Is there anything special I need to consider for labour and delivery? Find out more here...

[Pregnancy Resources](#)

This page contains a list of the trustworthy websites cited in the pregnancy section of this resource. To connect with other people living with chronic disease, request to join the [Mamas Taking Forward group](#) on Facebook. It's a group designed to help parents or those considering pregnancy while living with chronic illness.

1 Canadian Arthritis Patient Alliance
experience perspective voice



CAPA
Parenting with Arthritis
A Resource for Patients by Patients

You're contemplating a step into parenthood and also live with inflammatory arthritis? Start with this resource written by patients for patients with arthritis. We've learned through our own personal trials and tribulations and want to pay it forward. This resource has also been reviewed by a leading occupational therapist and researcher in parenting and rheumatic disease, [Dr. Catherine Esdaile](#). The resource is organized in the following topics - click on the titles below and take the first step in getting informed!

[Physical Care of Children](#)

Are you wondering how to adapt various physical tasks so your arthritis doesn't affect your ability to parent your children? Learn about a variety of the hacks for handling some common parenting tasks, like picking up and holding your child in and out of a car seat, bathing and more!

[Dealing with Fatigue and Flares](#)

Raising children is both exhilarating and exhausting - and then add in a systemic disease that causes flares, pain and fatigue. Learn some tips on how to manage your arthritis, fatigue, sleepless nights and how to ask for help.

[Impact on Children](#)

Arthritis can affect your parenting. What impact might it have on your children? Learn more about the positive and negative impacts on your children.

[Parenting Resources](#)

This section contains a list of the trustworthy websites cited in the parenting section of this resource. To connect with other people living with chronic disease, request to join the [Mamas Taking Forward group](#) on Facebook. It's a group designed to help parents or those considering pregnancy while living with chronic illness.

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experience perspective voice

Resources: Books

- Koehn C, Palmer T, Esdaile J. *Rheumatoid Arthritis: Plan to Win*. Oxford University Press, New York, 2002.
- Mosher D, Stein H, Kraag G. *Living Well with Arthritis*. Penguin Group, Toronto, Ontario, 2002.
- Lorig K, Fries J. *The Arthritis Helpbook: A Tested Self-management Program for Coping with Arthritis and Fibromyalgia*. Fifth edition. Perseus Books, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2000.
- Kroll K, Levy Klein E. *Enabling Romance: A Guide to Love, Sex and Relationships for People with Disabilities (and the People who Care About Them)*. No Limits Communications, Horsham, Pennsylvania, 2001.