

Inflammatory Arthritis Education Series

Lifestyle Management

This program has been reviewed and endorsed by



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CAPA Canadian Arthritis
Patient Alliance
experience · perspective · voice



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

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

- 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

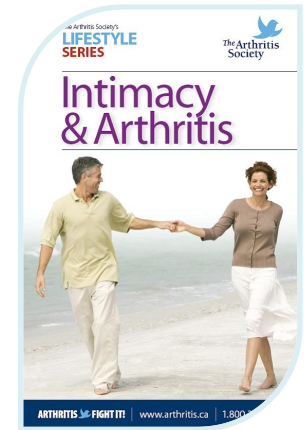
- Feeling sexual has a lot to do with how you feel about yourself and your body
 - Accepting that your body may have gone through some changes is a first step
 - Continuing to exercise can also help boost your confidence
- Look at new ways to adapt activities
 - You might not be able to be as physical 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 physical 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

- 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 SPF15 to 30 when out in the sun



Smoking cessation

Smoking cessation

- Cigarettes contain many toxins that are thought 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.jointhehealth.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 Assoc. 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:
www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/food-guide-aliment/index-eng.php
- 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

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.