



RHEUMATOID ARTHRITIS

Bromley

Well

HEALTH FACT SHEET

Updated July 2024

What is Rheumatoid Arthritis?

Rheumatoid arthritis (RA) is a long term condition that causes pain, swelling and stiffness in the joints.

What are the symptoms?

The symptoms usually affect the hands, feet and wrists and include:

Pain – Joint pain associated with rheumatoid arthritis is usually throbbing and aching pain that can be worse in the morning and after inactivity.

Joint stiffness – especially in the morning. E.g. you may not be able to bend your fingers fully if your hands are affected.

Swelling, warmth and redness: The lining of joints affected become inflamed causing the joints to swell, become hot and tender to touch.

Other symptoms may include:

- Tiredness and lack of energy
- A high temperature (fever)
- Sweating
- Weight loss
- Poor appetite

What are the causes?

Rheumatoid arthritis is an autoimmune disease. This means your immune system which usually fights infection attacks the cells that line your joints by mistake. This can make the joints to become swollen, stiff and painful. Over time, this can damage the joint itself, the cartilage and nearby bone.

It's not clear what triggers this problem with the immune system, your risk is increased by:

- Your genes – the condition may be due to inherited genes although this is rare
- Hormones – the condition is more common in women than men. This may be due to the effect of the hormone oestrogen
- Smoking – people who smoke are at increased risk of developing rheumatoid arthritis

What about treatment?

Treatment is designed to reduce joint, relieve pain, prevent or slow joint damage, reduce disability and enable you to live an active life.

Options include:

- Medication to relieve symptoms and slow disease progression
- Physiotherapy and occupational therapy to help keep you mobile
- Surgery to correct any joint problems that develop

WHAT SHOULD YOU DO?

DO A VARIETY OF ACTIVITY

We need a variety of activities to help build and maintain our stamina, our strength, our flexibility and our balance.

BREAK UP SEDENTARY TIME

A sedentary lifestyle (sitting or lying with low energy expenditure) can be detrimental for many reasons. Inactivity can increase your risk of Type 2 Diabetes, Cardiovascular Disease etc. Any movement can break this up including chair based exercise.

MAKE SMALL CHANGES OVER TIME

We want physical activity to be part of our daily lives so doing things like taking the stairs or making sure you take a break every hour to stretch etc can be really important.

START NOW

The sooner you start being physically active the sooner you can see some of the benefits.

To register with Bromley Well:

Freephone 0808 278 7898

Or register online:

www.bromleywell.org.uk/refer

Contact Lifestyle Support direct

07985 431484 / 07985 444210

or email

enquiry@bromleywell.org.uk



FURTHER RESOURCES

Versus Arthritis

Help Line: 0800 5200 520

A National charity providing information on the latest research into arthritis and tips and advice on managing the condition.

Arthritis Action

**Help Line: 0800 652 3188/020
3781 7120**

A National charity offering healthy eating advice, physical therapies, exercise tips and pain management techniques.

NHS Conditions Arthritis

NHS conditions pages contain information about the causes, symptoms and treatment of arthritis and advice for people living with the condition.

British Association of Dieticians Factsheets

The Association of UK Dietitians food fact sheets containing diet advice for people living with arthritis and tips for managing the condition.

References: NHS conditions <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/rheumatoid-arthritis/> NICE <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng100>

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