

Tips for parents

This leaflet was written after a request from mums who have RA. They felt that tips they had learnt should be passed on to other parents. It was written in conjunction with a Rheumatology Nurse Specialist.

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14/05/09: Julie Taylor & mums with RA

Sometimes your rheumatoid arthritis can remain quiet or inactive when you are pregnant. However, after the baby is born, the arthritis occasionally may then go into a flare, this could be within a couple of weeks or may be longer. This leaflet aims to give you a few suggestions on how to make your life easier when living with arthritis and a new child. This is not a definitive list, and some suggestions

may not work for you.

Whatever you try, please remember?everybody does things differently; there is?no “right way”.

Upstairs, Downstairs

Everyone has good and bad days but try overall to decrease the amount of time you go up and down the stairs.

- Have a duplicate nappy bag downstairs
- Keep spare clothes with the bag
- If you have room, keep a travel cot or Moses basket within easy reach
- Keep your Moses basket or carrycot on a stand or table to avoid bending down.
- Lift child up using your arms instead of your hands.

Stair Gates

These can be a nightmare to open. When buying one find a store that will let you try out the equipment as many times as you like. Look for one that:

- You can push shut
- Uses a button rather than a clasp so you can use your whole hand rather than your fingers
- Foam gates can be difficult to open if your hands are in flare.

Changing Time

When babies start to crawl and develop a mind of their own, this can be one of the most difficult jobs.

- Become an expert in distraction therapy, always keep a book or toy with the changing bag.
- Change at waist height wherever possible.
- Vasogen or any nappy creams with large lids for easy opening.
- Alternatively, if you prefer, transfer nappy creams to easy opening containers.
- If you prefer boxed wipes, Boots have one with a light touch opening.

Clothing

Think “ease.”

- Elastic rather than poppers
- Non-ironing clothes and easy care fabrics
- Dungaree clips can be difficult
- Some stores stock zipped baby grows and sleeping bags. If the zip is a problem, ask someone to add a tape securely to help fasten. (Make sure the baby is unable to get it in their mouths).
- Shoes – avoid buckles and go for Velcro or laces.

It doesn't matter if the child sleeps in the same shirt that they've had on during the day. It's the love

they get that's important; not their clothes.

Bathing

- Babies do not need to have a full bath every day.
- Try a baby bath that clips over the bath and fits under the taps with its own plug, making filling and emptying easier.
- Try using a baby-shaped sponge to support your young baby in the bath.
- If unable to bathe, use wipes/flannel to do the worst bits.

Out and About

- Pushchairs need to be as light as possible.
- Is the rain cover easy to put on?
- Can it be left on when putting the pushchair down?
- Are you able to lift it into your car?
- Is the harness easy to do up and adjust?
- How does it collapse?

Catches can be difficult; it is sometimes better to have a heavier pushchair with room for shopping underneath.

Bedtime

- Try out all the clasps. There are cots that lower the side by pushing your knees against the side.
- Have a cot that has two levels to make your life easier when putting the baby to bed when they are smaller.

Playtime

- Remember, anything can be used as a toy; you don't need expensive toys with fiddly buttons!
- Lullaby mobiles can be hard to wind up; a portable CD player with classical music can be just as soothing.

Don't feel you have to do everything yourself. Accept offers of help – it's easier to have a pre-arranged day/time for people to do specific jobs.

Babies are adaptable – they don't know whether you are doing things by the textbook.

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