

Resource

## Pain

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How the pain is treated will also depend in part on what is causing that pain. When pain is caused by active RA, controlling the disease itself can improve pain levels. Therefore, whilst disease medication

such as standard or biologic disease modifying anti-rheumatic drugs (DMARDs) are not painkillers, they can help to reduce pain, by controlling the disease that is causing the pain.

Pain that is caused by damage to joints tends to occur after having RA for a long period of time, and particularly when the RA is aggressive. This damage to joints is becoming less common and less severe as treatments continue to improve the outlook for RA patients, but it can still occur. In some cases, surgery may be recommended to improve pain levels in a damaged joint. A surgeon would weigh up the risks and benefits of such a surgery and should make clear to you what the expected outcomes of such a procedure would be, for example, whether it would be expected to improve pain levels, mobility or both and whether if one of these is improved it would have a negative impact on the other.

Regardless of the cause of pain, there are a number of ways in which it can be treated. It is not uncommon for people with RA to take painkillers and anti-inflammatories alongside their other medication, either long-term or during periods where their pain is especially bad, such as during a flare-up of their disease. There are also non-medicine ways to treat pain, such as applying a hot or cold pack to the joint, soaking the joint in warm water, using a TENS machine or techniques to improve pain levels, such as relaxation techniques and distractions.

## Read more

### [Managing flares](#)

Whether it's short-lived or so severe you can hardly get out of bed, a flare can be frustrating, bewildering and painful and it is important to find strategies to help make each flare as manageable as possible.

### [Surgery](#)

The decision to have surgery is understandably a very difficult one to make. All types of surgery carry risks to the individual and will require a recovery time. However, there can also be a lot of benefits to surgery, such as reducing pain and improving mobility.

### [RA medication](#)

RA is a very variable condition so, doctors do not start all patients in exactly the same way on the same drug regimen.