

Resource

Rheumatoid arthritis and fatigue

Fatigue is one of the most common and can be one of the most debilitating symptoms of RA. It is a level of tiredness which cannot always be eased through getting a good night's sleep, and it can have a major impact on day-to-day living.

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In an NRAS survey in 2014, 89% of rheumatoid arthritis patients surveyed said that they experienced fatigue, with 40% of those experiencing persistent and severe fatigue.

For people with rheumatoid arthritis, fatigue can be one of the hardest symptoms to manage. It is also

often severe, similar to that experienced in chronic fatigue syndrome. Yet we often hear some worrying things about fatigue, such as healthcare professionals not giving it as much attention as other symptoms and patients not knowing how best to manage their fatigue.

With this in mind, NRAS has created resources to help with fatigue, including our Fatigue Matters booklet and interactive fatigue diary.

Fatigue affects every aspect of your life. Pacing your activities can really help with fatigue management, but it's not always easy. It could involve making difficult decisions on prioritising of activities (including work) and how much to do each day and week, as well as whether to complete an activity or spread it out over several days, and this won't always come naturally to people. Keeping a diary of activity levels and fatigue levels can help you with pacing.

There are many other strategies that can help improve fatigue, including:

- a healthy diet
- a good level of exercise
- getting better control of your RA overall, through a combination of medication and self-management techniques.
- Relaxation techniques, to reduce stress and aid sleep.

There are many reasons why people with rheumatoid arthritis and other rheumatic diseases experience chronic fatigue (fatigue that is constant or long term). In RA, the immune system attacks the joints, causing a number of symptoms that can contribute to fatigue.

Fatigue can be worse during a flare, when you might experience chronic inflammation, with one or more joints swollen and tender.

Some of the common reasons for fatigue in RA include:

- chronic pain
- low mood, stress and other mental health issues
- disease activity
- disability
- lack of physical activity
- social isolation
- poor sleep. Poor quality, restless sleep is common in people with RA and you may find that painful joints cause you to wake up as you move during the night. People with RA can also be more prone to some sleep disorders, such as sleep apnea.

Fatigue matters

Fatigue can have a severe impact on the quality of life of those affected and it can come on at anytime without warning. We have created a self-help guide to explain what fatigue is, the causes and what you can do to tackle this symptom.

[Fatigue Matters](#)



Stress Matters

Our Stress Matters booklet follows on from our report by the same name, which covered the results of our study exploring patient experiences of stress in relation to their inflammatory arthritis (IA). This booklet explores what the findings of our study mean for people living with IA, what stress is and tips on how it can be managed.

[Stress Matters](#)



Read more

[Sleep](#)

Getting a good night's sleep can be tough, especially when you are suffering from the symptoms of RA. We hope that this article will help to give you some tips for getting a good night's sleep.