

Resource

## Useful tips

Day-to-day activities can be much harder when you have RA. Making these activities easier can mean making them less painful or less of a strain on joints. We have compiled a list of useful tips from people with RA to make daily life easier.

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In the bathroom

Many people with RA find that getting ready in the morning takes them longer than it would other people. The following tips can help you to get ready in the morning, when hands are often stiff and hard to use.

- To get stiff fingers moving in the morning, soak them in warm water in the sink or use microwavable wheat bags.
- Use a microfibre towel. It is lightweight and absorbent.
- A towelling dressing gown can absorb a lot of water after a bath or shower.?
- An electric toothbrush is a lot easier on the wrist and hand than a manual brush.
- Long handled foot brushes can help you to dry between your toes. If you are handy at sewing, you can make your own, by sewing a piece of flannel to the end of a flyswatter!
- Put shampoo and conditioner in soap dispensers if you find it hard to squeeze the bottles.
- Use a toothpaste squeezer if you struggle to get toothpaste out of the tube.
- If you have a choice of tap, lever taps are easier to use than ones that you have to turn.

## In the kitchen

A healthy diet is important for people with RA. Cooking can be difficult, due to needing to problems with grip. Carrying heavy loads, such as pans and kettles full of water can also be hard.

- Use a sponge for washing up, as this is easier to wring out than a cloth.
- Use a small, lightweight, plastic jug to fill your kettle, rather than taking the heavy kettle to your tap. You can also get a kettle tipper for pouring.
- Use a rubber opener for bottles and jars.
- Use a metal or wooden trolley on wheels to help you move items around your kitchen. This includes taking food out of the oven.
- Keep ready meals in your freezer, for days when you are struggling to prepare food.
- Put a colander in your saucepan before boiling vegetables. This way, you only need to lift the colander to drain the vegetables. You can then wait for the water to cool before needing to empty the saucepan.
- Use an electric mixer for whisking.
- If you are bottle feeding a baby, press the bottle teat down to release air. This makes the bottle easier to open.
- If you find it hard to spread butter, use a butter dish to store the butter you are using. This will be much softer and easier to spread.
- Open tin cans with an electric/ battery powered can opener.

## Getting dressed

Getting dressed can be difficult, especially when hands are stiff in the morning. As a result, people with RA often feel they have to choose clothes based on practicality over style.

- Loose fitting tops and tops with Velcro or popper fastenings can be easier than buttons. Buttons can be sewn over the top for decoration.
- Long-handled shoe horns and elastic laces help when putting on footwear.?
- Attach a piece of ribbon or elastic to the end of zips to make them easier to pull. For bags, you can also attach a small keyring.

- Use a set of fold up steps to reach into tall cupboards and wardrobes without straining.
- Silky pyjamas or fitted sheets can make it easier for you to turn in the night, to avoid waking. A silky coat lining can also make it easier for you to slide your arms into.

## Driving

Driving and car maintenance can be difficult when you have RA. Even being in a car or getting in or out of it can be uncomfortable.

- There are many items you can buy to adapt your car, making it easier for you to drive. They vary in expense and ease of use/fitting, but can make a big difference. Some examples include: Steering aids, indicator/horn extensions and foot controls.
- Automatic boot openers can make it easier to open the boot. This is especially useful if you are carrying shopping or using a mobility aid.
- Driving an automatic car is less strenuous, especially on long journeys.
- Thin driving gloves can make it easier to grip the steering wheel.
- Take rest breaks to break up long journeys, so that you can stretch your legs and relieve stiffness.
- Leather/ leather-effect carseats can be easier to swivel on for getting in and out of a car. Sitting on a silky scarf or plastic sheet can have a similar effect.
- Seatbelt pads can make seatbelts more comfortable on your body.

## Housework

Housework can be hard to keep on top of when you have RA. Having a cleaning rota and pacing activities can help. If there are other people in your household, make sure they are also on the rota!

- Use a lightweight vacume cleaner for stairs, upholstery and for inside your car.
- Buy coverless duvets, so that you do not have to put covers on and off when washing bedding.
- Use long handled dusters for tight gaps.
- Robot vaccum cleaners and robot lawnmowers can make house and garden maintenance easier.

## General tips

- Use rubber bands for added grip by wrapping them round handles (e.g. toothbrush or hairbrush). Pipe insulation lagging or pool noodles can also help with larger items (such as broom or mop handles).
- A contour turner can be useful for turning various household items, such as radiator taps. You can also buy a key turner for turning keys in locks.
- Buy 'plugs mates', which are handles you can attach to plugs, making them easier to remove.
- Use a 'grabber', to make it easier for you to pick items up from low down.
- Plan your day or week using a traffic light system. If you know an activity will take a lot out of you, make it red. Green activities take less energy or are enjoyable, and orange is between the two. Make sure you have more green than red activities each day. This will help reduce fatigue.
- Consider keeping spares of things you use a lot at home, so that you can keep them handy in different places. This way, you won't have to go up and down stairs to get them during a flare.
- Use over the shoulder bags or backpacks, to save your hands having to grip heavy bags.

- If bending to pick up your mail is difficult, attach a mail catcher to your letterbox.
- Use a headset, stand or speakerphone setting if holding your phone for a long time is difficult.

NRAS would like to thank all who contributed to these tips and will be happy to receive further tips by email at? [enquiries@nras.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@nras.org.uk)

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