

Tips to help you manage pain



Pain is a symptom of RA that can be difficult to manage. If you are struggling to deal with pain, speak to your doctor, they can advise you about the best ways to help manage your pain. Below is a list of different ways to complement your medication in helping to manage pain.

Alternate between hot and cold

Alternating between heat and cold packs can help to ease the pain that inflammation causes in RA. Cold packs can help to numb the feelings of pain, and heat packs can relax the muscles and joints.¹

A hot bath can also help to soothe stiff or painful joints.¹ Soaking in warm water reduces the force of gravity compressing your joints, offers 360-support for limbs, can reduce swelling and can increase circulation. Experts say that you should experience the maximum benefit of a hot bath after 20 minutes.²

Support affected joints by using a walking stick

Ask your doctor or a physiotherapist whether or not using a walking stick is right for you. A walking stick will help you take some weight off some of your affected joints, and can also assist with your balance.³

Exercise or stretch

Simple stretching exercises or low-intensity exercise could help to relieve pain and stiffness in your joints.¹ For examples of stretching or low-intensity exercises, see our resource on Exercise.

Distract yourself





It's often easier said than done, but if pain strikes, try finding something to take your mind off your pain and direct your focus elsewhere. For example, you could try ringing a friend for a chat or reading a good book.

Go to physical or occupational therapy

Physical therapy can help to restore joint function through specific exercises which can help to reduce pain for many people with RA. Simple tasks such as cooking or cleaning can sometimes be difficult to do and may cause pain. Occupational therapy can help you learn how to change some of your daily behaviours so they aren't as painful.¹

Try complementary or alternative therapies

Some people find that the following complementary or alternative therapies can help to alleviate pain:¹

MASSAGE THERAPY	ACUPUNCTURE	MEDITATION	MINDFULNESS
			

For more information about mindfulness, see our resource on Mindfulness

Speak to your doctor

If you are still experiencing pain despite being on treatment, or if you are noticing new pain, speak to your doctor. They can advise you about the best ways to help manage your pain, and there could be additional pain relief options available.¹

Remember, you are currently making a lot of changes aimed at improving your overall health. While you might not feel great today, this could change and every effort you make can have a positive impact.

References: **1.** Rheumatoid Arthritis Support Network. RA Pain: What is the Best Pain Relief for Rheumatoid Arthritis? Available at: <https://www.rheumatoidarthritis.org/living-with-ra/pain-management/> [Accessed March 2022]. **2.** Arthritis Foundation. Warm Water Works Wonders on Pain. Available at: <https://www.arthritis.org/living-with-arthritis/pain-management/tips/warm-water-therapy.php> [Accessed March 2022]. **3.** Creaky Joints. Using a Cane for Arthritis: What to Know Before You Buy One. Available at: <https://creakyjoints.org/living-with-arthritis/using-cane-for-arthritis/> [Accessed March 2022].

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