



Specialty Pharmacy

# Rheumatoid Arthritis (RA) Wellness Guide

**Walmart** 

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## Introduction

Whether you're actively managing a condition or just looking for information, Walmart Specialty Pharmacy is here to support you every step of the way. We're also here to make it easy to get your prescriptions, stay on track with your medication refills, and answer any other questions you may have.

We understand that treatment involves more than just medication. So, we're here to help you understand the lifestyle changes that may make managing your condition easier on a daily basis.

It is always recommended that you talk with your doctor about any changes to treatment plans.

Remember, your health conditions do not define you! It's okay to ask for help.

## What is rheumatoid arthritis?

Rheumatoid arthritis (RA) is a disease that affects the joints. It can cause pain, swelling, stiffness, and loss of function.<sup>1</sup> It's a chronic or long-term disease, but treatments are available. In addition, there are lifestyle choices and changes you can make to help prevent or more comfortably live with RA.<sup>2</sup>

Here's what you should know about RA.

## What are the symptoms of rheumatoid arthritis?

RA causes joint inflammation and pain from a failure of the immune system to work correctly.<sup>2</sup> It may cause you to feel tired, have occasional fevers, and lose your appetite. It may also lead to other heart, lung, nerves, eye, and skin conditions.

Symptoms include:

- Joint pain, tenderness, swelling, or stiffness lasting six weeks or longer
- Morning stiffness
- Pain in multiple joints

Small joints (wrists, certain joints in the hands and feet) are typically affected first, and the same joints on both sides of the body are involved<sup>3</sup> - but not always. Symptoms can come and go with inflammations or flares, lasting for days or months.

Joint pain can make it harder to stay active, which can cause weight gain. That, in turn, can lead to conditions such as high cholesterol, high blood pressure, diabetes, or heart disease.

## What are the common risk factors of rheumatoid arthritis?

Researchers aren't sure why some people develop RA, but common risk factors include:<sup>4</sup>

1. **Age** - your risk increases with age, with the onset highest among people in their 60s.
2. **Gender** - females are 2 to 3 times more likely to develop RA than males.
3. **Weight** - studies have found a connection between being overweight and a higher risk of RA.<sup>567</sup>
4. **Genetics** -people born with specific genes or inherited traits are more likely to develop RA.
5. **Smoking** - smoking tobacco can increase the risk and make the condition worse.

## What can you do to treat rheumatoid arthritis?

You can do many things to cope with RA. Treatments, including medications, surgery, and ongoing care from a doctor, can help people with the disease lead productive lives by relieving pain and swelling, preventing long-term damage, and helping them stay active.

Lifestyle changes that can help curb or prevent symptoms include staying active,<sup>8</sup> taking care of your joints, and regularly talking with your doctor, family, and friends. Here are some additional tips:



**Plan ahead** and create an action plan with your doctor or rheumatologist for necessary medication during flare-ups.



**Guard against infection** since RA is an autoimmune disorder. Make sure you're up to date on your immunizations and vaccines. Wash your hands frequently and avoid close contact with people who may be sick.



**Focus on mental health** since anxiety and stress can worsen inflammation and lead to depression, which can make inflammation worse. Find outlets for stress relief and get professional help. Talk to your doctor or care provider if you're experiencing depression, anxiety, or other issues.



**Hot & cold therapies** can help ease the pain of an RA flare, soothing pain and sometimes relaxing your muscles. Ask your doctor for hot and cold therapy treatment plans for your symptoms.



**Stop smoking** tobacco<sup>9</sup> since the use can have a harmful effect on anyone's health. It can increase your chances of getting other serious conditions like cancer. If you're having trouble stopping on your own, you can find helpful products at Walmart. Ask your pharmacist for recommendations.



**Eat healthy & nutritious meals** since it helps promote general wellness, making it easier to maintain a healthy diet and weather the effects of RA.<sup>10</sup> Walmart Grocery offers a large variety of healthy choices.



**Take dietary supplements** since studies have suggested that supplements like curcumin, turmeric, and omega-3 fish oil may help with RA pain and morning stiffness. But remember to speak with your doctor before taking any supplement- especially if you take any medications.



**Improve your sleep health** because a lack of sleep can worsen your symptoms, although we understand it can be hard to sleep when you feel pain or discomfort. A few tips for sleeping better with RA include going to bed at the same time every night and avoiding electronics, caffeine, and alcohol before you go to sleep. Walmart carries many products to assist with sleep. Ask your pharmacist for recommendations.



**Get support** from your family and friends. Loved ones of people with rheumatoid arthritis are often critical to treatment—but they're not always included as much as they could be. Involve your family in your treatment plan if possible.



## Resources & references

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We're here to help!  
For a list of participating pharmacy locations visit  
<https://www.walmart.com/aispoc>