

PROTECTING YOUR JOINTS – RHEUMATIC DISEASE

1 in 5 Americans has Rheumatoid Arthritis

Joint Inflammation is a Common Symptom of Rheumatic Disease

Arthritic conditions are distinguished by red, swollen joints and inflamed connective tissues such as cartilage, synovial tissue, and tendons. Other rheumatic diseases are considered autoimmune diseases, meaning that the body's immune system is attacking parts of the body.

This resource has been designed to provide education on proactive options on how those with Rheumatic Disease can help protect their joints.

01 | Protect Your Joints

Guard your joints from the damage of Rheumatic Disease by keeping them in good shape. Simple changes including lifestyle tweaks, diet and exercise can make a large impact on your joint health. The following are simple changes that will aid you in protecting your joints:

- **Lose weight** – Extra body weight puts stress on the hips, knees, and feet. Extra weight is shown to make it harder to decrease flare ups
- **Stay Active** – Regular exercise helps joints work like they should, eases stiffness, and relieves fatigue. Also exercise strengthens the muscles that support the joints
- **Stop smoking** – Rheumatic disease is another reason to quit smoking. Studies show that tobacco use can decrease the effectiveness of certain common treatments, thus making it harder to treat the disease
- **Choose the correct tools** – Assistive devices can help take the stress off damaged joints and protect them from injuries. Devices such as a cane or wide handle items can assist in decreasing the stress on your joints
- **Avoid joint strain** – Avoiding joint stress can be as simple as avoiding strain on a single joint by the incorporating the following:
 - o Carry a shoulder bag instead of a clutch or handbag
 - o Hold grocery bags in your arms, close to your body; do not grip with hands

- o Hold small items in your palms instead of fingers
- o Use both hands or shoulder to open heavy doors
- o Hold items with two hands instead of one

- **Practice good posture** – Good posture protects the shoulders, hip and knees. When lifting, keep the back straight, feet wide apart, and bend at your knees and hips, not your waist]

There are a vast amount of diseases categorized as Rheumatic disease. Symptoms and treatment options vary however there are many valuable resources available. For more information on joint health please visit: <http://www.everydayhealth.com/rheumatoid-arthritis/living-with/ways-youre-ruining-your-joints/>

Did You Know?

More than 100 diseases are classified as rheumatic disease

References

<http://www.healthline.com/health/rheumatoid-arthritis/facts-statistics-infographic>

<http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/rheumatoid-arthritis/in-depth/arthritis/art-20047954>

<http://www.patienteducationcenter.org/articles/arthritis-keeping-your-joints-healthy/>