

Smart Ideas

Premiere Issue

Good Health For You & Your Family

Winter 2008

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Take Home Copy

Know Your
**Cholesterol
Numbers**

Don't get bent out of shape by
**Rheumatoid
Arthritis**

Managing Your
Asthma
in Winter

Understanding
Psoriasis
It's the key to control

Hypoglycemia,
When Low Is Too Low

Word Games,
Enjoy your wait

A Publication of

American Academy
of
Nurse Practitioners

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Smart Ideas

Good Health For You & Your Family

Letter to our readers



Greetings!

Welcome to the premiere issue of *Smart Ideas* – the first patient-focused publication of the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners (AANP).

In addition to providing practical information and exploring the latest developments in healthcare, *Smart Ideas* will educate and inform you about the many services provided by a nurse practitioner (NP) and the advantages of having an NP as your “Partner in Health.”

NPs are different than other healthcare providers in that they partner with their patients - focusing on the whole person when treating specific health problems and educating patients on the effects those problems will have on them and their loved ones. The confidence that patients have in NPs is evidenced by the approximate 600 million visits that are made to NPs each year.

On behalf of AANP, the largest national professional membership organization for NPs of all specialties, I hope that you will enjoy *Smart Ideas*. It is indeed a smart idea to be an educated healthcare consumer.

Mona Counts

Mona Counts, PhD, CRNP, FNP, FAANP
President

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Word Games Answers...don't look until you've tried them first!

Crossword Corner Answers
Across 1. METABOLIC; 4. BIOLOGICS; 6. CHOLESTEROL; 7. EXERCISE; 9. DAMAGE; 10. DIET; 11. HUMIDIFIER; 12. NSAID
Down 2. TRIGLYCERIDES; 3. INFLAMMATION; 5. SCHARMAINE; 8. SWIMMING
Anagram Alley
1. TRIGLYCERIDES; 2. RHEUMATOID ARTHRITIS; 3. WINTER WHEEZING; 4. HEART DISEASE

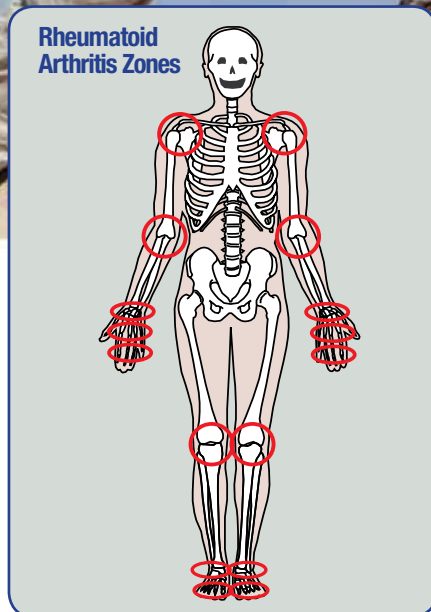
Hula Hoops. Thunderbirds. Phonograph records. Do you long for the simpler days that these symbols represent? Is the world changing too fast for you? If you are among the two million plus Americans who have rheumatoid arthritis, you should be glad that “the times they are a-changin’,” because the last decade has brought great improvements to the way rheumatoid arthritis is treated.

Don't Get Bent Out of Shape by Rheumatoid Arthritis



Rheumatoid arthritis (RA) is classified as an autoimmune disease, a condition in which your body mistakes healthy cells for foreign materials and attacks them. In the case of RA, the immune system attacks the lining of joints, causing inflammation (swelling, warmth, and redness) and pain in the those joints. The inflamed joint lining can release substances that may break down bone and cartilage, so over time, your affected joints can be permanently damaged,

leading to deformities, loss of movement, and more pain. Additional signs of RA include joint stiffness, especially in the morning, general tiredness, weakness, a low fever, or loss of appetite. RA typically involves the same joint on both sides of the body, so, for example, if your right wrist hurts, your left one probably will too. It is a chronic condition, meaning it doesn't go away, but you may experience times when you are feeling quite well, and others when the disease seems to flare up.



Treatment Options

RA affects different people in different ways, so you and your healthcare provider may have to try several treatment options before finding what works for you. You may benefit from both older and newer prescription drugs, as well as over-the-counter (OTC) medications. Older medicines for RA include nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), which decrease inflammation and pain, analgesics, which reduce pain but not inflammation, corticosteroids (commonly referred to as steroids), which lessen inflammation and slow joint damage, and disease modifying antirheumatic drugs (DMARDs), which, like steroids, slow the progression of RA and resultant joint damage.

You may hear many terms describing medications used in the treatment of your RA. Below is a description of the terms and some drugs it may refer to.

Term	What they do	Medications
Analgesics	Relieve pain	Tylenol, acetaminophen
NSAIDs (Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs)	Decrease inflammation and relieve pain	Aspirin, Advil, Motrin, Aleve, Celebrex (celecoxib) Mobic (Meloxicam)
Corticosteroids or Steroids	Reduce inflammation by suppressing the immune system.	Cortone (cortisone) Deltasone (prednisone)
DMARDs (Disease Modifying Anti-Rheumatic Drugs)	Slow the progression of joint destruction by interfering with immune system activity which triggers inflammation. May take several weeks to start working.	Rheumatrex (methotrexate) Plaquenil (hydroxychloroquine) Arava (leflunomide) Azulfidine (sulfasalazine)
Biologics (Biologic Response Modifiers)	Greatly slow the progression of joint destruction by targeting a specific chemical component which triggers inflammation in RA.	Enbrel (etanercept) Humira (adalimumab) Kineret (anakinra) Orencia (abatacept) Remicade (infliximab) Rituxan (rituximab)

The best exercises for RA improve flexibility, strengthen muscles and rely on smooth movements that do not stress affected joints.

Type of Exercise	Benefits	Good Activities
Range of Motion	Increases flexibility Reduces stiffness	T'ai Chi Yoga
Strength Training	Strengthen muscles supporting joints	Isometric exercises (resistance with no motion) Weight training (light)
Aerobic Conditioning	Improve joint function. Good for heart and lungs. Maintain/reduce weight.	Walking, Treadmill Swimming, Water Aerobics Bicycling, Stationary Bike

Make sure to consult with your healthcare provider before beginning any exercise program to make sure it's appropriate for you.

The newer drugs are called biologic response modifiers, or just plain biologics. These medicines block specific chemicals that cause joint inflammation and destruction. They are administered in two ways. Some are infused, which means the drug is delivered to your body by an intravenous drip performed at a clinic. Others are injected with a needle either in a clinic or by you at home. Biologics have really changed the way RA is treated. In the past, your healthcare provider may have only recommended an OTC analgesic or NSAID in the early stages of RA, but the biologics now allow providers to deal with

many things you can do to control its effects. Regular, moderate exercise, that strengthens muscles and bones and increases flexibility and endurance will help reduce joint stiffness, give you more energy, and make you feel less depressed. Yoga, t'ai chi, swimming and water aerobics are some other popular forms of exercise to help manage RA. Exercise will also reduce your risk of developing osteoporosis or brittle bones, which can develop as a result of inactivity and use of steroids to treat your RA. However, you must balance your exercise with periods of rest. A good rule of thumb is

Regular, moderate exercise, that strengthens muscles and bones and increases flexibility and endurance will help reduce joint stiffness, give you more energy, and help improve your mood.

RA early and aggressively to prevent joint and cartilage destruction. Your practitioner may even prescribe drug combinations to care for your RA. Since all medicines can have side effects or react with other drugs, make sure you tell your healthcare provider about all your medical conditions and all drugs you are taking, even OTCs and supplements.

But, medical management is not the only factor in treating RA. There are

to take it easy on future workouts if you have pain for more than two hours after you stop an activity. And sometimes if you are experiencing a flare-up, rest may be best.

Learning good stress-management skills can help reduce RA flare-ups. Don't be afraid to say "no" when you are asked to do something that will cause anxiety. In addition, ask friends, family, and coworkers for help with tasks. Deep breathing, progressively relaxing parts of your body,

and picturing pleasant images in your mind can also reduce tension and help you relax. Getting adequate sleep helps fight stress too. Therefore, try to avoid caffeine, alcohol, tobacco, and big meals near bedtime. If your stress becomes too much for you to manage, don't hesitate to seek professional help.

What you eat may affect your RA. Foods containing omega-3 fatty acids are believed to combat inflammation, a major element of RA. Fatty fish are a very good source of omega-3 fatty acids. Other foods that may be beneficial include walnuts, green soybeans, flaxseed oil, as well as healthy amounts of fruits and vegetables. You might also want to keep a food diary to see if anything you eat triggers a flare-up of your RA. In addition, if you are overweight, you should try to shed some pounds to lessen the stress on weight-bearing joints.

If you have RA, the future is looking brighter. Lifestyle adjustments combined with appropriate medications are effective at controlling your RA. And if you and your healthcare provider suspect that you may have RA tests are being developed to diagnose it sooner. Early diagnosis combined with prompt use of medicines, proper exercise, and other minor lifestyle modifications can help you control your RA so you live a more comfortable, active life.

