

Maximizing Your Treatment Success

Introduction

Today is the best time in history to be treated for rheumatoid arthritis (RA). Recent advances in medications and a better understanding of this disease means that you are much more likely to experience minimal to no symptoms when you correctly follow a treatment plan prescribed by your rheumatologist.

Taking medicines regularly for a chronic (life-long) disease like RA can be difficult and many people miss some doses. If you're not getting the most out of your treatment plan, there's an important concept to consider. It's something called "adherence" and it's very important to maximizing your treatment success.



Taking your medicine on a regular basis is like keeping your teeth healthy

You can think of taking your medicine like brushing your teeth. It's important to brush and floss every day to maximize your benefits (good health) and minimize your risks (poor health).

It's best to take your medicines exactly as prescribed by your doctor. If you make taking your medicine part of your daily routine, just like brushing your teeth, it gets easier to take it on a regular, consistent basis.

What is adherence?



Adherence is a concept that doctors use to describe how well you are taking your medication. The term adherence comes from the word "adhere," which means to "stick to" something. In the case of RA we're interested in how well you "stick to" your treatment plan.

There are 3 essential ingredients that make up good adherence:

- 1. Filling your doctor's prescription and starting to take the medicine right away**
- 2. Taking the medicine exactly how your doctor prescribed it (e.g., every day in the morning before eating breakfast)**
- 3. Continuing to take your medication exactly as prescribed over the coming months to years**

Why does adherence matter?



Chronic diseases like RA are life-long. That means once you have RA, you have it for the rest of your life. It won't go away, but you can learn to manage it.

It's important to take RA seriously. Early treatment can significantly improve your long-term outcomes. On the other hand, leaving RA untreated can have serious consequences. RA is more than a bit of joint pain and stiffness. It is a disease that affects your whole body, mind and spirit. We want you to understand this so you take your treatment seriously and stick with it. Sticking with your treatment plan is one of the most important things you can do to keep you feeling well over the long run.

What can I do about it?



Taking medicines regularly can be difficult for anyone. If you're missing some doses of your medicine, you're not alone. Research tells us that about one third of patients are really good at taking their medicines regularly. Another third are really bad at taking their medicine. The final third fall somewhere in the middle.

There are many reasons why people don't always take their medicine regularly. Sometimes people miss doses because they forget, or it makes them feel sick, or it's too expensive.

If you're not getting the most out of your treatment plan, the best thing you can do to help yourself is to talk to your doctor.

Here are a few tips to keep in mind when talking to your doctor:

- **Be open about what you're experiencing and how you're managing with your medicines**
- **Don't be afraid to tell your doctor if you're having trouble taking your medicines – your doctor is there to help you**
- **Be honest – if you're having trouble taking your medicines exactly as prescribed, your doctor can offer advice to help you stay on track**

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