

Power Your Inner RA Voice

A guide to making the most of your visit and not settling for "good enough"

Living with rheumatoid arthritis (RA) requires regular appointments and this time with your healthcare provider (HCP) is extremely important. Clinicians are using both virtual and in-person appointments to connect with their patients to ensure that their RA is being appropriately managed. Read on for tips on how to make virtual appointments a success and how to prepare for all appointments – virtual or in-person.



Schedule conversations, not appointments

Think of your time with your healthcare provider as a conversation: two people working together to manage your RA.



Prepare in advance and prioritize questions

To maximize your time, always have updates on how your symptoms of RA impact your ability to complete activities and prioritize your questions before the conversation. Before any virtual appointments, test the functionality of your video and microphone on the device that you are using. Be sure to consider the placement of your video camera so that the lighting is good, and your provider can see you clearly.



You know yourself the best

Your healthcare provider is an expert in understanding how to treat RA, but from head to toe, you know your body better than anyone. You know when you're meeting your goals or not. Acknowledge the expert in you by trusting your instincts and being honest when speaking with your HCP about how you're really doing. This becomes even more important when you are seeing your HCP at a remote visit, as they are counting on you to share information that can help them understand how your disease management plan is doing.



Be specific and honest

When your healthcare provider asks you: "How are you doing?" try to use more descriptive words about your RA symptoms than simply stating "fine," "good" or "OK." Be honest with yourself and your HCP and care team about how you are doing regarding your goals and symptom management, as well as your day-to-day triumphs and struggles. If privacy is a concern during virtual appointments, make sure you are in a location where you can speak freely – especially if you live with others. One benefit of virtual appointments is that you can share your surroundings with your HCP. This can build an understanding of your emotional wellbeing and how you live with RA, and encourage conversation.



Set goals

Ask your healthcare provider what you should expect from your management plan, and speak up when symptoms significantly impact you.

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As you prepare for the next conversation with your healthcare provider, use this conversation guide to write down specific updates that you want to share, including your wins, problems, goals and questions.



My Wins

No matter how big or small, "wins" are important to share and important to measuring your progress. Consider sharing:

- Which of your RA symptoms have improved, if any?
- A common daily task that you're able to do since your last appointment.

Example: Since our last conversation, I've been able to...



My Problems

Is your RA causing you issues? Consider sharing:

- Have your RA symptoms changed? Do you feel better, but not great?
- How are you feeling about the medication(s) you are taking?
- How are your symptoms affecting your ability to do certain tasks?

Example: I'm still not able to...



My Goals

For your RA management, make sure your goals are specific and measurable.

- A goal can be "I want to brush my hair" or "I want to take a walk."
- Ask yourself regularly, are you meeting these goals, and share your results with your healthcare provider.

Example: I want to be able to...



My Questions

It's essential to come prepared to your doctor's visit with questions that are important to you. Consider these questions:

- How can I better support my emotional wellbeing?
- When should our next check in be to make sure that the disease management plan we developed is working for me?



My Next Steps

Fill this section out in partnership with your healthcare provider to identify how to work together towards the joint goals that you've set.

Remember, if all of your questions aren't answered in one meeting, that's ok!

For further information or support, ask your physician about additional, trusted resources, such as a patient advocacy group.

Next appointment date: