

My Life with Arthritis (RA)

By Michael Smith, MD

I understand what it means to live with a painful and potentially disabling autoimmune condition like rheumatoid arthritis. I first started having symptoms of [ankylosing spondylitis](#) in the first couple of years of college – some 20+ years ago.

The information I have learned over the years has helped me deal with the pain and inflammation. While your doctor is key to successfully dealing with RA, you are the head of your treatment team. That's why I wanted to share some of my personal WebMD favorites – to hopefully make your struggle with RA a little bit easier.

We've come a long way in the world of RA, and one of the most important things we've learned in recent years is that early and aggressive treatment is key to getting rheumatoid arthritis under control and preventing disability. But it can be tough to know if you're doing all you can to manage your rheumatoid arthritis. [WebMD's Health Check](#) gives you a personalized action plan on how to take control of your rheumatoid arthritis.

And speaking of aggressive rheumatoid arthritis, this WebMD Rheumatoid Arthritis Exchange member is [desperate for information on how to deal with her aggressive RA](#). The Exchange members have rushed to help out. This discussion shows the real power of information and support. Having an autoimmune condition myself, I'm a big fanatic about exercise since it's what helps me lead an active life. And exercise is one of the best things you can do for yourself when you have RA. But you have to know what you're doing. Not sure where to get started? This quick and easy slideshow on [Joint-Friendly Fitness Routines](#) is a great first step!

Now onto what you think you know. Are you up to speed on all things RA? See if you've fallen victim to any of these [rheumatoid arthritis myths](#). Myth No. 8 is one of my personal favorites. You'll see why. Most people with RA are painfully aware of what RA can do to the joints. But have you really thought about [how RA affects the rest of your life](#) – marriage & relationships, raising children, your job? I particularly like this piece because it's full of tips from experts and others living with RA.

And last but certainly not least ... what about your sex life? It's not an easy thing for many of us to talk about and having RA can make that even tougher. These [sex therapist tips](#) help you learn how to get the sex back into your life even if you have RA.

It might sound trite but with RA, information really is power. Take time for yourself. There's a lot to know to successfully deal with RA. But it doesn't have to be overwhelming. Learn a little each day...each week.

Source: Michael Smith, MD at 12:40 pm WebMD.com