

How to cope with rheumatoid arthritis

DR TAREQ SALAHUDDIN

The nagging pains and physical limitations of the more than 100 forms of arthritis are common to millions of people. Rheumatoid arthritis is among the most debilitating of all forms, causing joints to ache and throb and eventually become deformed. Sometimes these symptoms make even the simplest activities — such as opening a jar or taking a walk — difficult to manage.

Unlike osteoarthritis, which results from wear and tear on joints, rheumatoid arthritis is an inflammatory condition.

There is no cure for rheumatoid arthritis. But with proper treatment, a strategy for joint protection and changes in lifestyle, you can live a long, productive life with this condition.

Signs and symptoms

The signs and symptoms of rheumatoid arthritis may come and go over time. They include:

- Pain and swelling in your joints, especially in the smaller joints of your hands and feet
- Generalized aching or stiffness of the joints and muscles, especially after sleep or after periods of rest
- Loss of motion of the affected joints
- Loss of strength in muscles attached to the affected joints
- Fatigue, which can be severe during a flare-up
- Low-grade fever
- Deformity of your joints over time
- General sense of not feeling well (malaise)

Rheumatoid arthritis usually causes problems in several joints at the same time. Early in rheumatoid arthritis, the joints in your wrists, hands, feet and knees are the ones most often affected. As the disease progresses, your shoulders, elbows, hips, jaw and neck can become involved. It generally affects both sides of your body at the same time. The knuckles of both hands are one example.

Small lumps, called rheumatoid nodules, may form under your skin at pressure points and can occur at your elbows, hands, feet and Achilles tendons. Rheumatoid nodules may also occur elsewhere, including the back of your scalp, over your knee or even in your lungs. These nodules can range in size — from as small as a pea to as large as a walnut. Usually these lumps are not painful.

In contrast to osteoarthritis, which affects only your bones and joints, rheumatoid arthritis can cause inflammation of tear glands, salivary glands, the linings of your heart and lungs, your lungs themselves and, in rare cases, your blood vessels.

Swelling or deformity may limit the flexibility of your joints. But even if you have a severe form of rheumatoid arthritis, you will probably retain flexibility in many joints.

Self-care

Treating rheumatoid arthritis typically involves using a combination of medical treatments and self-care strategies. The following self-care procedures are important elements for managing the disease:

-Exercise regularly. Different types of exercise achieve different goals. Check with your doctor or physical therapist first and then begin a regular exercise programme for your specific needs. If you can walk, walking is a good starter exercise. If you cannot walk, try a stationary bicycle with little or no resistance or do hand or arm exercises. A chair exercise programme may be helpful. Aquatic exercise is another option, and many health clubs with pools offer such classes.

It is good to move each joint in its full range of motion every day. As you move, maintain a slow, steady rhythm. Do not jerk or bounce. Also, remember to breathe. Holding your breath can temporarily deprive your muscles of oxygen and tire them. It is also important to maintain good posture while you exercise. Avoid exercising tender, injured or severely inflamed joints. If you feel new joint pain, stop. New pain that lasts more than two hours after you exercise probably means you have overdone it. If pain persists for more than a few days, call your doctor.

-Control your weight. Excess weight puts added stress on joints in your back, hips, knees and feet — the places where arthritis pain is commonly felt. Excess weight can also make joint surgery more difficult and risky.

-Eat a healthy diet. A healthy diet emphasising fruit, vegetables and whole grains can help you control your weight and maintain your overall health, allowing you to deal better with your arthritis.

However, there is no special diet that can be used to treat arthritis.

-Apply heat. Heat will help ease your pain, relax tense, painful muscles and increase the regional flow of blood. One of the easiest and most effective ways to apply heat is to take a hot shower or bath for 15 minutes. Other options include using a hot pack, an electric heat pad set on its lowest setting or a radiant heat lamp with a 250-watt reflector heat bulb to warm specific muscles and joints.

-Apply cold for occasional flare-ups. Cold may dull the sensation of pain. Cold also has a numbing effect and decreases muscle spasms. Do not use cold treatments if you have poor circulation or numbness. Techniques may include using cold packs, soaking the affected joints in cold water and ice massage.

-Practice relaxation techniques. Hypnosis, guided imagery, deep breathing and muscle relaxation can all be used to control pain.

-Take your medications as recommended. By taking medications regularly instead of waiting for pain to build, you will lessen the overall intensity of your discomfort.

Coping skills

The degree to which rheumatoid arthritis affects your daily activities depends in part on how well you cope with the disease. Physical and occupational therapists can help you devise strategies to cope with specific limitations you may experience as the result of weakness or pain. Here are some general suggestions to help you



cope:

-Keep a positive attitude. With your doctor, make a plan for managing your arthritis. This will help you feel in charge of your disease. Studies show that people who take control of their treatment and actively manage their arthritis experience less pain and make fewer visits to the doctor.

-Use assistive devices. A painful knee may need a brace for support. You might also want to use a cane to take some of the stress off the joint as you walk. Use the cane in the hand opposite the affected joint. If your hands are affected, various helpful tools and gadgets are available to help you maintain an active lifestyle. Contact your pharmacy or doctor for information on ordering items that may help you the most.

-Know your limits. Rest when you're tired. Arthritis can make you prone to fatigue and muscle weakness. A rest or short nap that does not interfere with nighttime sleep may help.

-Avoid grasping actions that strain your finger joints. Instead of using a clutch purse, for example, select one with a shoulder strap. Use hot water to loosen a jar lid and pressure from your palm to open it, or use a jar opener. Do not twist or use your joints forcefully.

-Spread the weight of an object over several joints. For instance, use both hands to lift a heavy pan.

-Take a break. Periodically relax and stretch.

-Maintain good posture. Poor posture causes uneven weight distribution and may strain ligaments and muscles. The easiest way to improve your posture is by walking. Some people find that swimming also helps improve their posture.

-Use your strongest muscles and favor large joints. Do not push open a heavy glass door. Lean into it. To pick up an object, bend your knees and squat while keeping your back straight.

HAVE A NICE DAY
Dr RUBAUL MURSHED
All health information to keep you up to date



The Honey
Honey's reputation as a 'universal remedy' may be a subject of debate among scientists, but much contemporary research supports its long list of beneficial functions. It is found that mixture of honey with different items can be used to remove the symptoms of various diseases.

Mohammed Ali, the boxing legend takes a daily dose of honey, garlic and apple cider vinegar to lighten the symptoms of Parkinson's disease. Many other athletes use it to gain competitive edge. Some believe that fresh honey is highly beneficial but should not be used with fish, radish or melon. With so many effective uses, it is no wonder that miraculous results have been attributed to honey and its by-products. Let us start visiting honey's medicinal world.

Arthritis:
In a study of arthritis victims Dr Angus Peters of University of Edinburgh's Arthritis Research Institute found a daily dose of apple cider vinegar and honey reduced pain by 90 percent.

The weekly World News, Canada has published a list of diseases that can be cured by honey and cinnamon as researched by scientists. Arthritis patients may take one cup of hot water with two spoons of honey and one small teaspoon of cinnamon powder daily in the morning and at night. If taken regularly even chronic arthritis can be cured.

Make a paste of one part honey to two parts of lukewarm water and a small teaspoon of cinnamon powder and massage it on the affected

part of the body slowly. It is noticed that the pain recedes within a minute or two.

Heart problems
Pure honey improves cardiac activity. It has a very useful effect on the weakened heart muscle in various types of cardiac diseases. It causes veins to expand and improves circulation through coronary arteries.

The heart muscle works continuously and needs glucose to make up energy expended. Honey contains a unique mixture of glucose and fructose that are quick and easy to absorb. It does not cause the sudden drop in blood sugar that is associated with refined sugars.

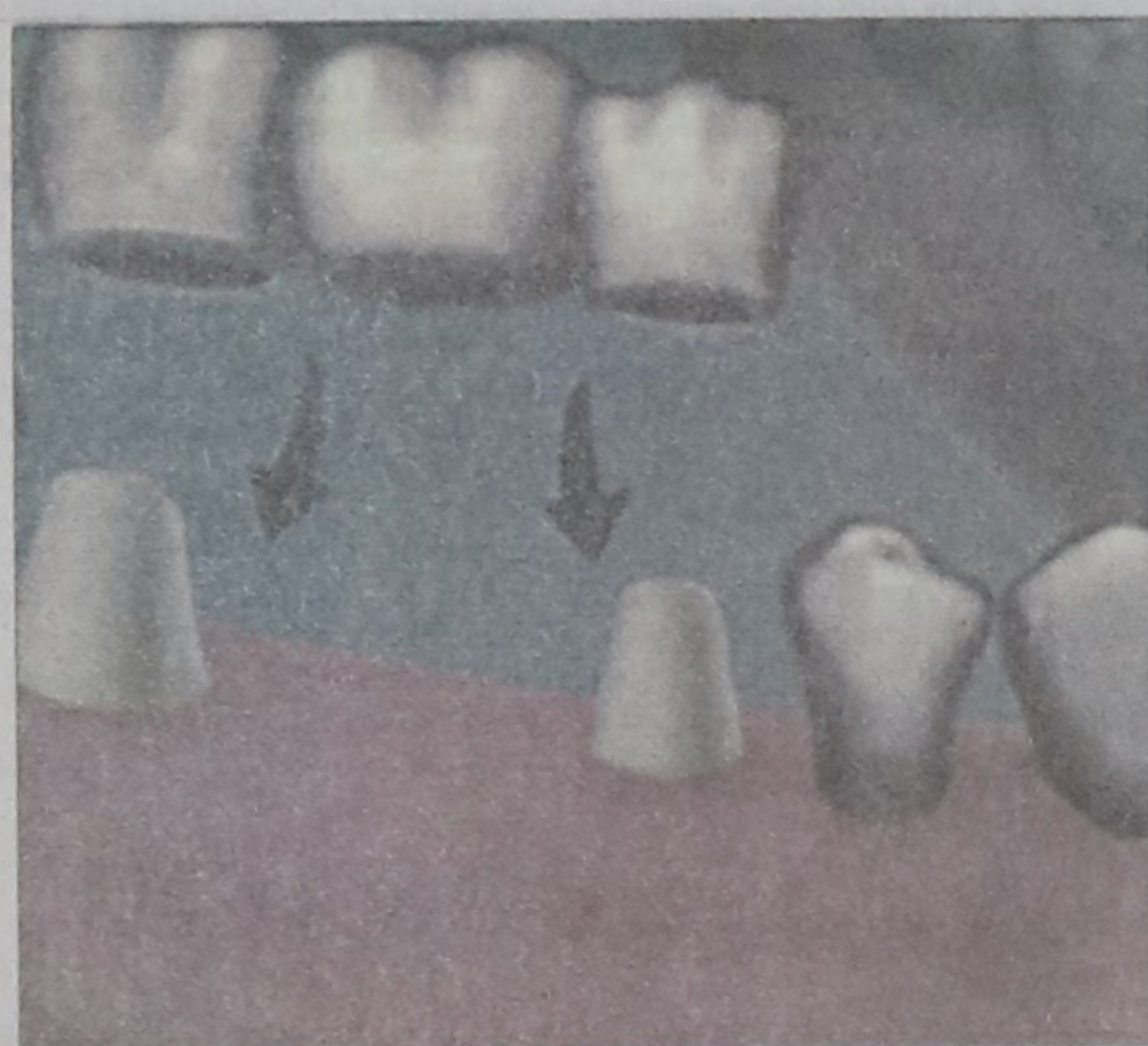
Make a paste of honey and cinnamon powder, apply on bread or tea and take it regularly for breakfast. It reduces the cholesterol in the arteries and saves the patient from heart attack. Regular use of the above process strengthens the heartbeat.

It has found that due to the increasing age the arteries and veins, which lose their flexibility and get clogged, are revitalised. If two tablespoons of honey and three teaspoons of cinnamon powder mixed in 16 ounces of tea water are given to a high cholesterol patient, it reduces the level of cholesterol in the blood by 10 percent within 2 hours.

As per information received in the said journal, pure honey taken with food daily relieves complaints of cholesterol.

(To be continued)

The writer is a Healthcare Management Specialist and Visiting Professor of North South University (NSU), Dhaka, Bangladesh.



BETTER TREATMENT OPTION

Dental implant or bridge?

DR MD NAZRUL ISLAM

Recently one of my relative came to Singapore for some official training of two weeks and suddenly he developed a toothache. So I brought him to our dental center unit of National University Hospital (NUH) and only found that one of his teeth is in very bad condition and needs to be removed.

He understood the situation but wanted to know what could be done to replace that removed tooth. Several options were given like implant, bridge or denture prosthesis. He asked me what was the advantage of implant over dental bridges? Then I thought about letting know more people regarding the advantages of implants over conventional dental bridges.

If we have missing tooth, how do we replace it now? The most common practice now is to have a dental bridge. For the bridge work of a single missing tooth, normally we cut the adjacent two healthy teeth in to a smaller shape and size to put the bridge on top.

If we want to bridge teeth adjacent to a missing tooth, we have to cut down the healthy teeth first. Then a three unit cap made joined together to form the bridge. The bridge is then cemented in to place.

But making bridges has its

drawbacks and limitations as well. Sometimes cutting the tooth into smaller size makes it sensitive, so we also may need to do a root canal treatment for that tooth though it was healthy.

Two studies done at Eastman Dental Institute, University College London and at University of Wales College of Medicine UK showed that the overall success rate of root canal treatment is about 68-87 percent. That means, still there is chance of failure of RCT which was done to your healthy teeth and if your supporting teeth for the bridge fails, the whole bridge has to be removed and with the support of another new healthy teeth, you can have another bigger bridge if you want.

So we can see to replace one lost tooth we are putting two healthy teeth at a risk of losing. But with implants, no need to touch any adjacent teeth. Even implants can be used for a bridge work in case of many missing teeth.

The implants replace your missing tooth so naturally that you will have the feeling of getting back the natural one. You can also eat and chew more care freely.

The writer works at National University of Singapore. E-mail: nazrul_402@yahoo.com
For more information on implants, visit my website at <http://idcbangladesh.googlepages.com>

Proper skin care: Cleanse, moisturise, protect

STAR HEALTH DESK

Your skin is among your body's most conspicuous features. It helps protect you against the environment and plays a major role in your appearance. But your skin needs regular care and attention in order to remain healthy and attractive. Taking good care of your skin — including proper cleaning, moisturising, use of sunscreen and shaving — can help prevent skin-related problems, such as dry or rough skin, deep wrinkles, liver or brown spots, and skin cancer.

Cleaning your face: Be gentle
Cleaning is an essential part of caring for your complexion. Whatever your skin type — oily, dry, balanced or combination — the key to cleaning is to treat your skin gently. When washing your face:

-Remove eye makeup. Use a soft sponge, cotton cloth or cotton balls and moisturising cream to avoid damaging the delicate tissue around your eyes. If you wear heavy, waterproof makeup, you also may need to use an oil-based product such as petroleum jelly.

-Use lukewarm water. Avoid washing your face with very hot water, which can dry out your skin.

-Avoid strong soaps. Strong soaps — those most capable of stripping oil from your skin — can leave your skin dry. These products do not contain additives such as moisturisers or moisture retainers. A mild cleanser, typically labeled as such, may also be a good choice.

-Avoid irritating additives. If you have sensitive skin, avoid products containing perfumes or dyes. These can irritate your skin and may possibly trigger an allergic response.

-Use your hands to wash your face. Instead of using a washcloth, which can be abrasive, wash your face gently using your fingers.

-Rinse thoroughly and pat dry. Use a soft cotton towel to dry your face. Generally, wash your face once in the morning, once in the evening and after exercising or engaging in sports. If your skin is very dry and easily irritated, washing once a day may be enough to remove sweat and oil from your skin.

You may also consider using a toner or astringent after washing your face. These products, which remove oil and soap residue, help make your skin feel tight and clean. They are generally drying and may contain water, alcohol or witch hazel, propylene glycol or salicylic acid. Some people find them to be too drying and irritating. Others find that they work well in removing excess oil.

Bathing: Avoid drying out
Bathing is essential to good hygiene. But bathing removes natural oils from your skin, which can result in dryness and irritation. To minimise the drying effects of bathing, follow these steps:

-Bathe once a day. Bathing once a day is generally enough to maintain good hygiene. If your complexion is very oily, you live in a warm and humid environment or you are physically active, twice a day may be more appropriate. If you have dry skin, bathing every other day may be best.

-Use warm water and limit bath time. Hot water and long showers or baths remove even more oil. Limit your bath or shower time to about 15 minutes or less. And use warm, rather than hot, water.

-Use appropriate soaps. Choose mild, superfatted soaps, which are products that have oils and fats added to them just after

releasing water into your skin.

Apply moisturisers immediately after taking a shower or bath, as this helps to trap water in the upper layers of your skin. You may like the feel of an oil-in-water cream. If you have dry skin, consider using a heavier, water-in-oil moisturiser rather than a light, disappearing moisturising lotion that contains mostly water. If your skin is very dry, you may want to apply an oil, such as baby oil, while your skin is still moist. Oil has more staying power than moisturisers do and prevents the evaporation of water from the surface of your skin. If your skin is oily, you may prefer to skip moisturising.

During the winter months, you may notice that your skin is drier. This is due to lower relative humidity, with a combination of cold air outside and dry heat indoors. Keeping the air in your

cancer.

Shaving: Gently remove hair
Shaving is a common and inexpensive way to remove unwanted hair. However, shaving can cause skin irritation, especially if your skin is thin, dry or very sensitive.

If you shave with a blade razor, always use a sharp blade. If you are a man, soften your beard before shaving by applying a warm washcloth to your face for a few seconds. Then use plenty of shaving cream to further soften the hair. Pass the blade over your beard only once, in the direction of hair growth. Do not reverse the stroke, as it can cause a skin irritation called razor burn. If you are a woman, use cream or lubricating gel when shaving your legs. Shave in the direction of hair growth, and not against it.

If you use an electric razor, know that this method also can be irritating to your skin if done too vigorously. Move the razor gently over your skin. Electric razors work best — and are least irritating — when used on hair that is dry, stiff, and free of perspiration and excess oil.

Maintaining a healthy lifestyle: How it helps your skin
Good skin care involves more than just using the right soap and moisturiser. Your lifestyle also plays an important role in your skin's health and appearance. Follow these lifestyle tips for healthier skin:

-Eat a healthy diet. Your body needs adequate amounts of protein, vitamins and minerals in order to keep your skin healthy. Eat a diet rich in fruits, vegetables and whole grains. And drink plenty of water to help keep your skin hydrated.

-Exercise. Exercising improves blood circulation, which in turn may improve your skin's tone and color.

-Sleep well. If you are not getting enough sleep, or the quality of your sleep is poor, your face will show it. A lack of sleep may turn your complexion puffy, lackluster and sallow.

-Quit smoking. In addition to putting you at risk of heart disease and cancer, smoking may cause your face to age prematurely.

-Protect yourself from the sun. Dark skin can tolerate the sun better than fair skin can, in that it absorbs less harmful rays. However, any complexion can become blotchy, leathery and wrinkled from continued sun overexposure. Overexposure also increases the risk of skin cancer. Use sunscreen generously, wear protective clothing, and try to avoid sun exposure between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.



the soap manufacturing process. Add bath oils, which are very moisturising, to your bath. Consider using a soap substitute. These products vary, but may include a mild synthetic detergent or an oil mixed with a wetting agent (surfactant). If you have dry or sensitive skin, use soap only on your face, underarms, genital area, and hands and feet.

-Pat dry. After bathing, gently pat or blot your skin dry with a towel so that some moisture remains on the skin. Immediately moisturise your skin with an oil or cream.

Moisturising: Hydrate your skin
Moisturisers help maintain your skin's natural moisture levels, which the environment and your lifestyle frequently deplete. Moisturisers work by providing a seal over your skin — to keep water from escaping — or by slowly

Vienna selected to host international conference on HIV/AIDS in 2010

City's proximity to eastern Europe and central Asia, and strong commitment to HIV by government, scientists and civil society among the reasons Vienna selected to host XVIII international AIDS conference

STAR HEALTH REPORT

Vienna, Austria has been chosen to host the XVIII International AIDS Conference (AIDS 2010), the largest international meeting on HIV, where every two years 25,000 participants representing all stakeholders in the global response to HIV meet to assess progress and identify future priorities.

Based in Geneva, Switzerland, the International AIDS Society (IAS) is the world's leading independent association of HIV professionals.

"The International AIDS Society and its partners are extremely pleased to partner with the City of Vienna, the Government of Austria and local scientific and community leaders, who have a long history of leadership on HIV issues," said IAS President-elect, Dr. Julio Montaner, Director of the BC Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS and International Conference Chair for AIDS 2010. "Because the 2010 conference will coincide with the deadline that world leaders set for the goal of providing universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support, all eyes of the world will be upon Vienna."

Dr. Montanersaid, "The conference is an opportunity to look specifically at the challenges facing the emerging epidemics in Eastern Europe in the context of hardest hit regions around the world and the overall global response."

"The International AIDS Conference is the most important gathering for the release and discussion of scientific, programmatic and policy developments in the global response to HIV/AIDS. As the largest and most diverse international gathering devoted to a global health issue, the conference brings together the movement of people responding to the HIV/AIDS epidemic to share their lessons and together stake out the road ahead."

According to the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), an estimated 150,000 people in Eastern Europe and Central Asia were newly infected with HIV in 2007 bringing the number of people living with HIV (PLHIV) in the region to 1.6 million. This compares with 630,000 PLHIV in 2001, an increase of 150%. Worldwide, an estimated 33.2 million people are living with HIV and more than 2.1 million people died of AIDS in 2007.

AIDS 2010 will be held from 18 to 23 July 2010 at the Reed Messe Wien. It will be the eighteenth in this series of international AIDS conferences. In August 2008, it will be held in Mexico City, Mexico, and the previous meeting was held in Toronto, Canada in 2006. With more than 2,500 international journalists expected to attend, the conference is the single most widely covered health event in the world.