

Rheumatoid Arthritis Fact Sheet from RA Warrior

Who has Rheumatoid Arthritis (RA)?

There are 1.5 million people in the U.S. with RA. The typical RA patient is a woman in her late 30's to mid-40's. However, children can get one of several forms of [Juvenile Rheumatoid Arthritis \(JRA or JIA\)](#). And [men get RA too!](#)

Is RA a serious illness?

Yes, RA is a serious illness comparable to Type 1 Diabetes. RA patients tend to have a shortened lifespan & require lifelong treatment by specialists. Being diagnosed with RA doubles the risk of developing cardiovascular disease; some studies say 1/2 of all RA patients die from CVD. RA attacks the lining around vital organs in the same way it attacks joints. RA patients frequently manage several other [secondary illnesses due to RA](#). Most RA patients have numerous hospitalizations & joint surgeries & require physical assistance at times.

Is there a cure for RA?

No, [there is no RA cure](#). The internet is full of so-called cures, many handed down through antiquity. Friends often prescribe juices or Tylenol Arthritis to cure their friends' RA. There are [good reasons that it is hard to find a real RA cure](#): RA is an extremely complex disease & it is heterogeneous, meaning it does not always behave the same way, even in a single patient. Think of it like trying to cure a virus that mutates.

However, research funding for RA averages as little as \$25.90 per patient and remains significantly low compared to other chronic diseases that affect far fewer people like Lupus, type-1 Diabetes and Multiple Sclerosis, which average \$330.00 per patient.

What's it like living with RA?

The 2 most common symptoms are pain & fatigue. Some RA patients have [a mild course of the disease](#) & live a rather normal life. Still, they probably live with regular doctor visits, the most expensive drugs in the world, side effects of medicines & several physical limitations. People with severe RA may experience deformity, damage, or disability even early in the disease. Most RA patients are somewhere in the middle.

RA symptoms can improve & worsen alternately in most patients in a [pattern called flares](#). It can be unpredictable how physically disabled a person with RA will be at any particular time. This unpredictability can be a source of frustration. [RA almost always progresses](#), becoming more severe over time. Because RA damage is often not visible to casual observers, it can be difficult for RA patients to receive physical assistance or exceptions that they require.

What kind of medicine do people take for RA?

Most [people with Rheumatoid Arthritis take 2 kinds of medicine](#): 1) to suppress the disease; 2) to manage symptoms. The best medicines for RA today are called **disease modifying drugs**. They fight RA by suppressing the immune system. Also, most RA patients need medicine to manage symptoms of RA which remain even with aggressive disease treatment. RA can cause severe pain akin to a broken bone or other acute injury. Often, the medicines cause side effects like nausea, weight gain, or susceptibility to infection.

What can others do to help those living with RA?

Many simple things can be done to improve the lives of people living with RA. First, you can learn about RA & help spread awareness about the disease as you learn. Those who are more educated about RA probably won't [hurt someone's hand](#) or make [insensitive comments](#). Second, you might avoid exposing them to germs since infections are a danger & ask about other ways to help such as providing physical assistance.

For help or more info on RA, go to rawarrior.com.