

# Communicating and getting support



Don't be afraid to ask for help, there's plenty of support available

## Communicating with your healthcare team

An open, honest relationship with your doctor can help ensure you receive the tailored care that you need. You are likely to see several healthcare professionals throughout your rheumatoid arthritis (RA) treatment, including:<sup>1</sup>



### Your consultant rheumatologist

This is probably the doctor that diagnosed you with RA.

They should always be your first port of call with any questions about your condition or your treatment plan.

They can explain your treatment options and how they work and address any queries and concerns you may have.



### Your GP

Can help advise on diet and exercise, address any challenges with your treatment and help you access other support services.



### Rheumatology nurse

Can monitor your overall health and give you more information about your condition or treatment.



## Your pharmacist

Can provide tips on how to stick to your treatment plan and give you information about interactions between RINVOQ and other medicines.

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It's important to inform any other doctor, dentist and pharmacist that you are taking RINVOQ prior to receiving any treatment.

For a full list of important safety information and details on possible side effects, please see the Consumer Medicine Information (CMI) available from <https://www.medsafe.govt.nz/Consumers/CMI/r/rinvoq.pdf>.

## Other specialists that can help

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### Psychologist

To help you deal with the emotional strain of living with RA.<sup>1</sup>

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### Occupational Therapist

To provide practical techniques to make daily activities easier.<sup>1</sup>

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### Hand Therapist

To help get your arms and hands working as well as possible if they are impacted by your RA.<sup>1</sup>

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### Physiotherapist

To help you move better and stay active and independent.<sup>1</sup>

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## Support at work

Occasionally you may find it challenging to work as usual because of your symptoms. Many patients with RA find that people struggle to understand their disease because the symptoms are not visible. Fatigue is one of the symptoms that can make it hard for you to complete the tasks that you need to for work, so it's good to speak to people at work to make them aware that you could be struggling.

### Talk to your manager

- It can be a good idea to keep your manager, employer or HR manager updated about your condition (if you feel comfortable discussing it)
- Let your manager or employer know early on about upcoming healthcare appointments so it gives them time to make any necessary arrangements
- You can ask for modifications that could help you perform more effectively at work such as flexible hours or working from home

### Talk to your colleagues

- Talking to colleagues about the fact that you're living with RA can help them understand more about your condition
- Having someone that you are close to at work that you can talk to if you are having a bad day can help

## Support from family and friends

It may seem like the easy option to tell friends and family "I'm fine" even when you're not. Being honest and open with your family and friends about your condition can help you get the support you may need. People who are close to you will want to help you, don't be ashamed to ask for help with errands that you may be struggling with. For example, you could ask a family member to help you out when cooking a meal.

## Support from your partner

Speak to your partner about your condition so they can understand how you are feeling. Discuss what things you may need help with, and ask them if they are comfortable to offer you the support that you may need. If physical intimacy is proving to be an issue, talk to your partner about this, and you can arrange times when you are likely to be feeling the most physically comfortable.

## Support when in a crisis

If you need crisis support call Lifeline on 0800 543 354 or Text 4357

Gain further support for managing things like anxiety and depression at [www.depression.org.nz](http://www.depression.org.nz)

Also speak to your healthcare professional.

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**References:** **1.** Versus Arthritis. Who will treat you? Available at: <https://www.versusarthritis.org/about-arthritis/treatments/who-will-treat-you/> [Accessed March 2022]. **2.** Arthritis Foundation. Rheumatoid Arthritis in the Workplace. Available at: <https://www.arthritis.org/living-with-arthritis/life-stages/work/rheumatoid-arthritis-in-the-workplace.php> [Accessed March 2022]. **3.** EverydayHealth. Rheumatoid Arthritis can be an invisible illness. Available at: <https://www.everydayhealth.com/rheumatoid-arthritis/symptoms/rheumatoid-arthritis-invisible-illness/> [Accessed March 2022]. **4.** Versus Arthritis. Work. Available at: <https://www.versusarthritis.org/about-arthritis/living-with-arthritis/work/> [Accessed March 2022]. **5.** American Psychological Association. How to help a friend of loved one suffering from a chronic illness. Available at: <https://www.apa.org/helpcenter/help-chronic> [Accessed March 2022]. **6.** Creaky Joints. How inflammatory arthritis can really affect marriage and relationships, according to 8 couples coping with it. Available at: <https://creakyjoints.org/support/how-arthritis-affects-marriage-and-relationships/> [Accessed March 2022].

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