

## Rheumatoid Arthritis Management

Prevention of deformities

### Via Splinting

Avoiding undue stresses to the joint

### Via Exercises

Protect joints while maintaining ROM during phases of exacerbation

In Exacerbation (Active phase): Exercise only one ROM per joint / day but full ROM of all Joints.

In Remission (Passive Phase): ROM exercises every day 2x /day full ROM



### Treatment

**Stage I:** Home Exercise Program to maintain ROM

Energy Conservation, Work Simplification techniques,  
Adaptive devices to make living with RA easier

Learn ways to reduce pain via heat or cold,  
Night resting splints

**Stage II:** It is in this stage of RA that patient may benefit from functional splints before the deformities become fixed, thus preventing abnormal stresses on the joints with functional activities. Since this slows the progression of the deformities, it can prevent or delay surgeries.

**Stage III:** Patient would benefit from formal therapy to improve ROM via splint, modalities etc.

*The sooner the physician sends the patient to get fitted with these custom splints the better the chances of the patients living a full functioning life than one with deformities and disabilities.*

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Hands-On-Care  
presents



**Therapeutic  
Management of  
Rheumatoid  
Arthritis**



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# Rheumatoid Arthritis

## What is Rheumatoid Arthritis

- Most common connective tissue disorder
- A systemic disease
- Inflammatory condition
- Zig-Zag deformity
- It is an Inflammatory condition



causes inflammation of the joint fluid (Synovitis)

Inflammation of articular structure with the use of the hand. This stretches the ligaments thus putting abnormal stresses on it.

The Synovitis Infiltrates cartilage, tendons, and ligaments

The joint fluid stretches the joint capsule

It erodes the cartilage & bone

Disrupts the Ligaments holding the joints together

Impairs gliding of tendons

May also cause nerve compression

## Symptoms

- Pain
- Stiffness
- Deformities
- Nodules
- Intrinsic muscle fibrosis



## Stages of RA

### Phase I

Synovitis of joint & tendon mechanism

Pain & swelling

Inability to move the hand correctly

No obvious deformity

### Phase II

Synovitis

Joint Subluxation &/or dislocation

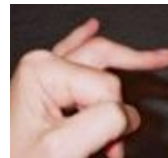
Deformity – passively correctible



### Phase III

Minimal or no joint destruction

Deformity – fixed



### Phase IV

Joint destruction

Significant soft tissue disturbance

Multiple deformities

In all these stages a patient with RA slowly loses function



Fingers start drifting towards the small finger

Awkward looking fingers

Inability to open the palm

Inability to Grasp objects

## When to see a certified hand therapist

Before you start to lose function your rheumatologist should refer you to a Certified Hand Therapist for an RA exercise program and protective splints.

In Stages I & II

## When to see a Hand Surgeon

When fingers start drooping and you have a difficulty lifting finger

Or wrist bone gets very prominent or wrist and elbow gets stuck

However you can prevent or delay this if you wear splints and have a proper program set up by your Certified Hand Therapist.

Therapists role in the management and prevention of progression of RA

In **Conservative Management** we provide the patients with the knowledge in arthritis management including

- Patient education
- Splinting – Protective/functional
- Joint protection
- Energy conservation / Work Simplification
- Prevention of deformities
- Pain control
- Improving life styles