

Mayo Clinic News Network

O20 Rethinking Rheumatoid Arthritis

Intro: A diagnosis of rheumatoid Arthritis, or RA, can be pretty scary. That’s because the chronic condition can cause painful damage to your joints. Vivien Williams introduces us to doctors at Mayo Clinic who say early diagnosis and an aggressive approach to treatment may help more people with RA get better control of their disease.

Video

Audio

TRT 2:35 Voice of Vivien Williams	At first Pam Sinicrope [Sin'-ih-croap] thought her knee pain was from over-doing it on the tennis court.
Pam Sinicrope Has Rheumatoid Arthritis	"I thought, oh, it's just a typical sports injury."
Voice of Vivien Williams	Then she hurt her other knee.
Pam Sinicrope	"Then I injured my left shoulder."
Voice of Vivien Williams	Then pain and stiffness in her wrist and fingers that would come and go. Pam was diagnosed with rheumatoid arthritis.
Pam Sinicrope	"I was scared. I thought my life was basically over."
John Davis, M.D. Mayo Clinic rheumatology	"What is Rheumatoid arthritis? It is an autoimmune inflammatory disease. And when we say autoimmune, it's really the immune system attacking itself."
Voice of Vivien Williams	Dr. John Davis says the joint capsule has a lining of tissue called the synovium. The synovium makes fluid that keeps the joint lubricated. When you have rheumatoid arthritis your immune system sends antibodies to the synovium and causes inflammation. This causes pain and joint damage, especially in small joints in fingers and hands, but it can affect any joint.
Pam Sinicrope	"When you find out you just have to let go and express your feelings, cry, do whatever you need to do to let the emotions out. And then get into problem-solving mode."

Voice of Vivien Williams	For Pam, that means controlling what she can: she eats a very healthy diet, researches to learn about RA, and she began treatment fast.
John Davis, M.D. Mayo Clinic rheumatology	“The current mantra is: Treat the target. We want to initiate treatment. Then we want to, in a fairly short period of time, measure if it’s working. And if it’s not we want to begin making changes in an assertive fashion over time.”
Pam Sinicrope	“I’m on methotrexate and low dose prednisone.”
Voice of Vivien Williams	Prednisone taken short term to calm inflammation, and methotrexate long-term to keep the RA in control. If those treatments are not enough, they can be combined with what are called biologic treatments.
John Davis, M.D. Mayo Clinic rheumatology	“The majority of people, with our current techniques and with using a combination of medications together, get good control and can get back to their usual function the majority of time.”
Voice of Vivien Williams	Dr. Davis says patients like Pam may soon benefit from research at Mayo Clinic that explores new therapies and how a person’s genes might tell doctors which medications work best. They’re searching for new ways to give each individual patient exactly the care they need.
Voice of Vivien Williams	Pam knows RA is a life-long condition, flare-ups may happen and she has to pace herself sometimes. But treatment is working.
Pam, Sinicrope	“I feel great. I feel better than I have in 10 years.”
Voice of Vivien Williams	For the Mayo Clinic News Network, I’m Vivien Williams.

Anchor tag:

There is no cure for RA, and some patients continue to struggle with significant symptoms. But with aggressive and prompt treatment, Dr. Davis says most RA patients can get control of the disease.

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