

THE LINK BETWEEN RA AND HEART DISEASE

How Does RA Affect Your Heart?

Inflammation and Heart Disease

More than 50 percent of premature deaths in people with Rheumatoid Arthritis (RA) result from cardiovascular disease. Inflammation associated with Rheumatoid Arthritis is known to contribute to blood vessel damage and thus increasing the risk factor for heart disease.

This resource is intended to help educate patients on how Rheumatoid Arthritis increases their risk of heart disease and options on how to decrease their risk.

How Does RA Affect the Heart?

Inflammation due to RA can lead to fluid collection around the heart (pericardial effusion). This usually causes mild symptoms, if any, but it can be very severe and lead to poor heart function. Rheumatoid Arthritis related inflammation can affect the heart muscle, the heart valves, or the blood vessels of the heart (coronary arteries). Heart attacks are more frequent in patients with rheumatoid arthritis than those without it, therefore, regular monitoring and cardiovascular health is important.

How to Protect Your Heart

An active lifestyle, balanced nutrition and good control of inflammation can lower your risk of developing cardiovascular problems. Here are five ways to decrease your risk of heart disease:

01 | Control Cholesterol

Control your cholesterol to give your veins and arteries the best chance of remaining clear of blockage. Blockage in the veins and arteries lead to heart disease and stroke, keeping them clear of blockage lowers your risk.

02 | Eat Better

Eating heart healthy foods is the best weapon for fighting cardiovascular disease. A diet rich in high

grain fiber, lean protein and vegetables will not only keep you feeling fuller longer but will also help lower your risk.

03 | Manage Blood Pressure

High blood pressure is a major risk factor for heart disease and stroke. When blood pressure is kept within a healthy range there is less strain on vital organs including your heart and kidneys.

04 | Lose Weight

Being overweight can lead to additional risk factors including high blood pressure, high cholesterol and diabetes. Losing weight, including decreasing your waist size will contribute to a decrease in many of the high risk factors for heart disease.

05 | Stop Smoking

Smokers have a high risk of developing cardiovascular disease, therefore quitting is the best option to lower your risk. Speak to your doctor regarding options on how to quit.

For additional resources on RA and heart disease visit: www.arthritis.org

Did You Know?

RA patients will have cardiac problems within 1 year

References

<http://www.arthritis.org/living-with-arthritis/comorbidities/heart-disease/osteoarthritis-ups-cvd-risk.php>

<http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/rheumatoid-arthritis/basics/complications/con-20014868>