

Rheumatoid was a
mild case at the time.



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Rheumatoid Arthritis a Debilitating Disease It began seven years ago when Sandra woke up and was getting out bed. She went to stand up and she felt this severe pain in both of her feet.

When she looked at her feet they were swollen and bluish red and warm to the touch. She could not understand what was happening. At first she thought she might have frozen her feet.

But as time went by she started to get lumps on the bottom of her feet so she went to see the doctor. The doctor did some tests and he diagnosed Sandra with having a disease called rheumatoid arthritis though it was a mild case at the time. Over the past seven years it has become more severe, even doing little day- to- day jobs has become more difficult.

Rheumatoid arthritis can be a crippling disease that causes painful swelling and stiffness that mainly affects the wrists and fingers but it can also affect other areas of the body (The Arthritis Society, 2001). The Statistics from the Canadian Arthritis Society say it affects 300, 000 Canadians, that is 1 in 10 will develop rheumatoid arthritis. This paper will discuss what rheumatoid arthritis is, some of the treatment for this disease and lifestyle changes that people can make to live a better with rheumatoid arthritis.

What is rheumatoid arthritis? Doctors do not know what exactly causes rheumatoid arthritis, but rheumatoid arthritis is a debilitating disease that has several special features that makes it different from other kinds of arthritis. For example, rheumatoid arthritis generally occurs in a well-formed pattern. This means that if a knee or hand is involved, the other knee and hand are also involved (Nat'l Inst. Of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin

Disease, 1998). Rheumatoid arthritis is a disease where the immune system begins to attack the joints. This causes an inflammation, usually in the small joints of the hands, wrists, feet and many times spreading to the knees and hips.

The affected joints have pain, swelling, warmth, and stiffness after prolonged immobility, extreme fatigue and loss of function (Rall & Roubenoff, 2000). In addition to affecting the joints, rheumatoid arthritis may occasionally affect the skin, eyes, lungs, heart, blood, nerves, and kidneys. You may also experience lessening of appetite, weight loss and fevers. As well 20 per cent of people will develop lumps that form over the joints and other parts of the body, that are called rheumatoid nodules and that can be rather painful (The Arthritis Society, 2001). Rheumatoid arthritis affects every person differently.

In most patients, joint symptoms develop gradually over several years. In some patients, rheumatoid arthritis may progress rapidly. Rheumatoid arthritis has a genetic or inherited factor that makes some people more likely to develop this disease than others (Shlotzhauer & McGuire, 1993). Twice as many women develop rheumatoid arthritis than men.

Most people will develop rheumatoid arthritis between the ages of 25 years and 50 years old but rheumatoid arthritis can affect people of all ages from toddlers to seniors. What are the treatments for rheumatoid arthritis? Most people with rheumatoid arthritis seek a variety of treatments for their arthritis. The first defense to fight rheumatoid arthritis is medication.

According to the Arthritis Society, there are four types of medications used in the treatment of rheumatoid arthritis.

One group of medication is non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs; a medications that reduce the pain and swelling but does not prevent further joint damage. The second type of medication is disease modifying anti-rheumatic drugs; a group of medications that works by slowing or stopping the immune system from attacking the joints. The third medication is oral cortisone, which is a steroid that reduces inflammation and swelling. And the last group of medication is biologics, a newer drug.

These drugs block specific hormones which are involved in the inflammatory process. These are the most common medications used in the fight against rheumatoid arthritis. Another treatment is using heat from a heating pad or a hot pack to relax the muscles, and reduce joint pain and soreness. Cold from an ice pack will help lessen the swelling in the joints. Sandra says, " I fine that if I use heat on my shoulders it helps quite a bit