

Rheumatic diseases and planning a family: Know the facts

If you have a rheumatic condition like **Rheumatoid Arthritis (RA)**, **Psoriatic Arthritis (PsA)**, **Ankylosing Spondylitis (AS)** or **Non-radiographic Axial Spondyloarthritis (nr-axSpA)** and are thinking about having a baby, it is important to consider specific information about your condition and speak to your rheumatologist about a plan of action.

Here are some facts to help you get the conversation started:



FACT

Having your rheumatic condition under control can help make it easier to conceive

Changes in disease activity, treatment plan, and how well your condition is controlled can affect how long it takes to conceive. If your disease is **well controlled**, studies have shown that **3 out of 4 women with RA become pregnant within 1 year of trying**.^{2,3} Talk to your rheumatologist today if you are concerned about how well your condition is managed or if you have concerns about conceiving.



FACT

Not all antirheumatic drugs are safe to use during pregnancy or while breastfeeding

While having good control of your rheumatic condition is important, not all disease-modifying antirheumatic drugs (DMARDs) can be used while you are pregnant or nursing. Make sure you talk to your rheumatologist about all the medications you are taking prior to becoming pregnant - including those for your rheumatic condition - so that you can work together to come up with a safe treatment plan for pregnancy and breastfeeding.



FACT

Keeping your rheumatic condition under control while pregnant can help reduce the risk of complications

Women with poorly controlled RA may be at increased risk for **disease flares, having an infant small for their gestational age, delivering pre-term, and miscarrying**. Therefore, it is essential to establish good control over your condition, months before you even attempt to conceive.

Ideally, your rheumatic condition should be controlled for 3 to 6 months before attempting pregnancy



FACT

3 out of 5 women with rheumatic conditions felt they could not breastfeed while on treatment

According to the Canadian Autoimmune Motherhood (AIM) Survey, over 60% of women with rheumatic conditions felt they could not breastfeed while taking their treatment. At the same time, more than 80% of women did not consult their rheumatologist during pregnancy.

It's always best to share your concerns with your rheumatologist. They can provide you with the right guidance so that you can make the right decisions for you and your baby.

REFERENCES:

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2. Arthritis Research UK. Pregnancy and arthritis. Available at: <http://www.arthritisresearchuk.org/arthritisinformation/daily-life/pregnancy-an-arthritis.aspx>. Accessed January 2018.
3. Legwohl M, Van Vorhees AS, Siegel M, et al. A Comprehensive Survey Assessing the Family Planning Needs of Women with Psoriasis. Poster session presented at The 5th World Psoriasis and Psoriatic Arthritis Conference; 2018 June 27-30; Stockholm, Sweden

