



A DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR PATIENTS

Speaking to a healthcare professional about your overall wellbeing, such as the impact of a condition on work or your emotions, can feel daunting for some people. To help you feel confident at your next consultation, we've created a guide to help you **'Start the Conversation'** with your healthcare team on things which matter most to **you**.



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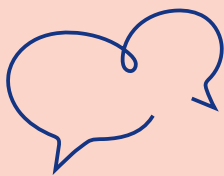
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INTRODUCTION

When you're first diagnosed with a rheumatic condition, many questions will likely run through your mind. From what to do next and how to deal with your diagnosis through to new considerations with your lifestyle.

Living with a chronic condition may seem uncertain and daunting but remember that your healthcare team are there to support you, through every part of your journey.

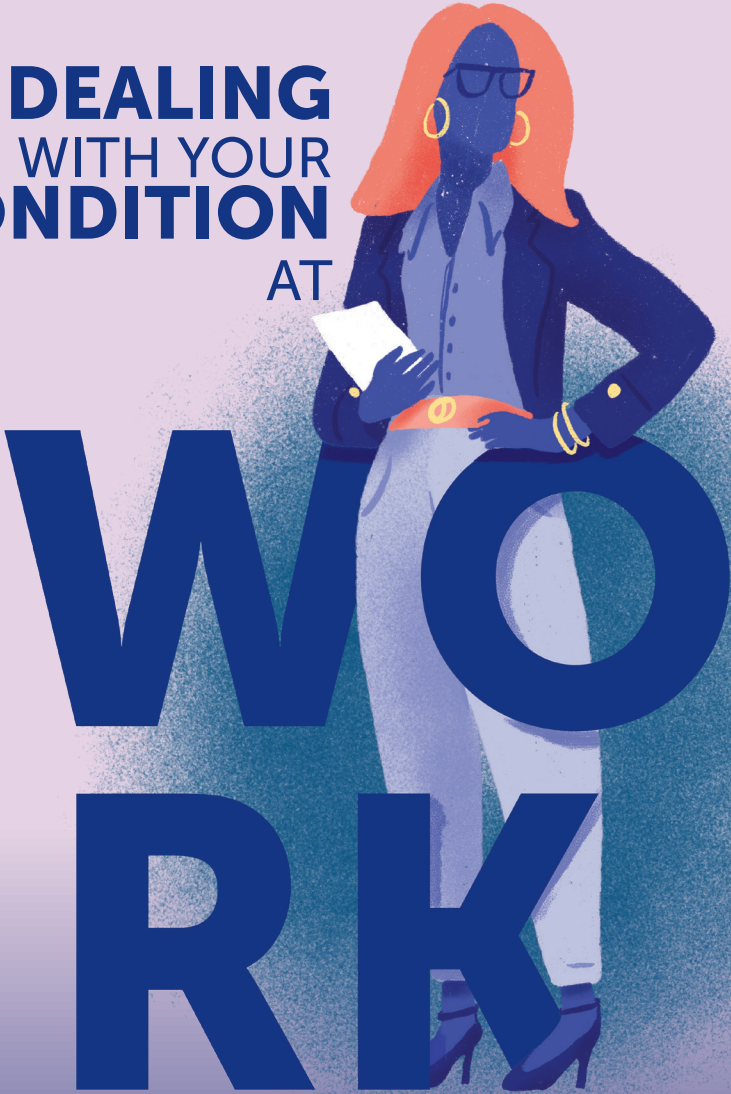
Decisions around the management of your disease should feel collaborative and in order for your healthcare team to give you the best advice they can, they need to understand your unique needs as well as hopes for the future.



It is not always easy to raise topics during consultations and your mind can go blank when asked 'do you have any questions?'. This guide is here to support you in Starting the Conversation with your healthcare team to help ensure that living with your chronic condition doesn't limit your ambition or hopes for the future.

You might be surprised at the opportunities and resources available when you ***Start the Conversation...***

**DEALING
WITH YOUR
CONDITION**
AT



People with rheumatic conditions can sometimes find that their work life is affected. It can be difficult to talk to your employer and/or colleagues about your symptoms – they are complicated and often hard to understand yourself, let alone trying to explain to others! If you are struggling to communicate the impact of your condition at work, or looking for ways to manage your condition during the working day, why don't you use your next appointment to **Start the Conversation** with your healthcare team.

Here are some questions you might want to consider:



- › Can my condition affect my ability to work?
- › Is there anything I can do to reduce the impact of my condition on my work?
- › Should I inform my employer or co-workers about my condition?
- › Are there any tasks or activities that I should avoid at work to prevent flare-ups?
- › Do you have any recommendations on how I can manage symptoms during my working day?
- › Do you have any advice or resources to help me explain my condition to my employer so that they understand how it impacts me at work?

NAVIGATING SOCIAL IAL



LIFE

WITH YOUR
CONDITION

Sometimes, living with a rheumatic condition can interfere with your social life. You might find yourself wondering whether there is anything you could be doing differently, or if some social activities might suit you better than others.

Maintaining a social life that you are happy with is important. If you want to **Start the Conversation** with your healthcare team, here are some questions that could help:



- › How can I help my family/friends understand how my condition affects my ability to socialise?
- › Are there any groups you can recommend for connecting with others who have a similar condition?
- › What strategies can I use to help manage the pain and fatigue associated with my condition so that I can participate in social activities more comfortably?
- › Are there any specific lifestyle changes or modifications I could consider to better manage my social life?
- › What could I bring with me on a trip to best manage my condition when I am away from home?
- › Are there any sports or social activities that could worsen my condition?
- › What impact does alcohol have on my condition?

MANAGING
THE

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IMPACT

OF YOUR **CONDITION**

The impact of living with a rheumatic condition can take its toll on your emotional, as well as physical, wellbeing. It can feel hard to discuss these issues and explain to your loved ones what it is like to live with your condition. If you are struggling, why don't you bring it up at your next medical appointment. Your healthcare team are there to support you, and here are some questions you could consider to

Start the Conversation:



- > Can you share any information on how my condition may affect my emotional wellbeing?
- > Do you have some recommended coping mechanisms that would help with any impact to my emotional wellbeing or feelings of stress and anxiety?
- > How can I help my family/friends understand how my condition affects me on a day-to-day basis?
- > Are there any lifestyle changes or therapies that can help with my emotional wellbeing?
- > What should I do if I experience a significant change in my emotional wellbeing?
- > Are there any resources available to support me with the stress of living with my condition?

**PLANNING
FOR THE**



Thinking about what might happen in the future can be worrying for some people with a rheumatic condition. There may be additional considerations that you need to bear in mind, and planning for the unexpected, as well as what can be expected, is a good way of feeling in control and confident that you will be able to deal with any situation that comes your way.

One consideration for the future may be whether you'd like to start a family at some point. Maybe it is something you think about a lot, or maybe it is something you don't envisage for many years. Either way, it is a good idea to open the conversation early as it may influence the medication your doctor advises. Some medication should not be used during pregnancy and, if you decide you want to start a family in the future, or there is potential for an unplanned pregnancy, it's important you've had time to explore and settle on suitable treatment options.

Here are some questions you might want to consider for your next appointment to ***Start the Conversation***:



- › How might my condition affect me if I decide I want to try for a baby in the future or continue with an unplanned pregnancy? Will this impact my ability to conceive or carry a pregnancy to term?
- › Does my medication choice affect my options for contraception and family planning?
- › Will I be able to stay on the same medication if I become pregnant?
- › Should I stop taking any medications before trying to conceive?
- › What are the risks associated with taking certain medications during pregnancy?
- › Should I delay pregnancy until my condition is better controlled?
- › How often should I see my rheumatologist during pregnancy?
- › Will my condition affect my ability to breastfeed?
- › Are there any precautions I should take during pregnancy to avoid flare-ups of my condition?

NOTES FROM MY **APPOINTMENT**

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THINGS TO REMEMBER AT **MY NEXT APPOINTMENT**

Only you know the impact your condition is having on your life right now, as well as on your hopes for the future. Your healthcare team is there to support you but they will not know the issues you are facing unless you discuss them. Maybe it is time to Start the Conversation during your next appointment and see where it takes you – you might be surprised at the opportunities and resources available.



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Inspired by **patients.**
Driven by **science.**