

Managing Pain & Inflammation



Q&A

Living with Arthritis: It Can Happen to Anyone

At the age of 25, in her best shape ever, Canadian Olympic snowboarder and two-time world champion **Spencer O'Brien** was diagnosed with rheumatoid arthritis (RA). Months before the 2014 Sochi Winter Games, O'Brien feared her athletic career was over. With the right treatment and therapies, she was able to not only continue to pursue her dream of being a professional snowboarder, but to be one of the best in the world. Mediaplanet spoke with O'Brien about her experience as a world-class athlete living with RA.

Autoimmune conditions such as RA can be extremely difficult to detect and diagnose. What was your diagnosis experience like?

It took several months to get diagnosed from the onset of symptoms. As an athlete, when it comes to injuries, we work very much on schedules. If you break a bone it's three months off, if you have ACL surgery it's nine months off. Being unable to

snowboard and having no idea what was wrong with me was very challenging mentally. It started with small aches and pains that gradually worsened. I attributed them to just getting older and doing a high-impact sport for so many years. I kept getting very odd joint injuries and eventually my doctors were able to pinpoint exactly what was going on. By that point I was pretty incapacitated physically, so it was a huge relief to receive a diagnosis.

How do you balance your demanding athletic career with the struggles of RA?

It's been a journey to find the right medication and regimen that works for me, but after lots of trial and error and support from my doctors and physiotherapists, I found a formula that works for me. Most of the time it's just listening to my body and respecting when it's time to rest and when it's time to push my body.

How has RA affected your daily life?

It was a huge adjustment at first, but now that I've figured it out and am on the right medication, I feel that I'm

able to live a very normal life that reflects my age and athleticism and not my disease. There are still flare-ups from time to time and fatigue hits me harder than most people but I've learned to adapt and to take the flare-ups as friendly reminders of how lucky I am to still do what I do.

Has your diagnosis affected your mental health? If so, how do you seek support?

Absolutely. I've struggled with depression throughout my career, especially during the time leading up to my diagnosis and with various injuries. I'm learning how to ask for help when I need it and I utilize resources like therapy more often.

What wisdom would you share with those who have also been diagnosed with RA?

Be an advocate for your health. You know your body better than anyone and sometimes you'll have to fight to have your voice heard. Don't be afraid to speak up and to push if you feel like something isn't right or needs adjusting. Learning to stand up for my health was one of the biggest lessons I've learned. ■



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Pain Is Personal, Take Control



Trish Barbato
President & CEO,
Arthritis Society

Pain is something that everyone can relate to. We try our best to avoid it, and to protect those we love from it. But for the six million Canadians living with arthritis, pain is all too often a part of daily life.

While there's no one-size-fits-all solution to take away the pain, there is one place people can turn to for help.

"The Arthritis Society offers extensive, evidence-based information and support to help people manage their pain and take control of their disease and their life," says Trish Barbato, President and CEO of the Arthritis Society. "People with arthritis often feel that others don't take their pain seriously. We know it's serious!"

The Arthritis Society's online tools, such as the medication reference guide and the guide to drug-free pain management, can help people with arthritis make informed decisions about their treatment plan. Its website also offers a self-directed online course to help people learn strategies for minimizing pain and finding relief. There are also videos, webinars, and a section devoted to assistive devices that can help people perform everyday tasks more easily.

"Pain is personal — where it hurts, how much it hurts, and what helps ease it. It can differ for everyone," says Barbato. "Taking an active role in understanding and managing it is important."

The work of the Arthritis Society doesn't stop at education. It's on the frontlines with elected representatives and policymakers advocating for changes to help the one in five Canadians living with arthritis. And it's investing in research. In fact, the Arthritis Society is the largest charitable funder of arthritis research in Canada. Great advances have already been made because of research but more are needed to help ease pain, and to one day find a cure for Canada's most common chronic condition. ■



To find resources and support, visit arthritis.ca.



Take **control** of your arthritis.
We can help.

arthritis.ca



How Biosimilars Are Transforming Arthritis Care

There are more than 300,000 Canadians living with rheumatoid arthritis, an autoimmune disease that causes joint pain and damage throughout the body. Without the right treatment, chronic pain and disability are the unfortunate consequences.

Ken Donohue



Cheryl Koehn
Founder & President,
Arthritis
Consumer
Experts

Cheryl Koehn knows chronic pain and disability too well. Once a high-performance athlete, she was diagnosed with rheumatoid arthritis in her late 20s. “I couldn’t walk or chew food, but I never thought the symptoms were arthritis,” she says. “I lived in denial and got depressed. I was desperate to make it go away.”

Twenty years ago, Koehn founded Arthritis Consumer Experts, Canada’s largest national arthritis patient-led organization, where patients and researchers work together to fast track science. The big break for arthritis treatment and improved quality of life for patients came with the development of powerful medications called biologics. “When I started biologics, I could interlace my fingers with my husband’s for the first time,” says Koehn. “This allowed me to go from about 40 percent of normal function to 75 percent. I could play tennis and I took up cycling.”

Biosimilars and biologics: what’s the difference?

As much as biologic medicines were a transformative treatment for those with arthritis and other diseases two decades ago, biosimilars have been similarly so.

Both originator biologics and biosimilar biologics are medicines developed from living cells that target a specific molecule. When the patent of an originator biologic expires, other manufacturers are allowed to make a biosimilar version of the medicine. There are no expected clinically-meaningful differences in efficacy and safety between a biosimilar and the originator. Biosimilars go through a rigorous review and testing process by Health Canada and other regulators around the world to ensure they’re safe and effective.

“Biosimilars deliver the same patient outcomes as originator biologic medicines. It’s amazing to see the scientific data that demonstrates the similarity between the two medications,” says Koehn. “One isn’t superior to the other, except when it comes to cost. That’s important as the savings generated by biosimilars may be reinvested into health care resources needed by Canadian patients.”

The biosimilar transition

Biologic medicines are time-consuming and expensive to develop. This can make it difficult for the health care system to afford them, and limits patients’ access to biologics. Biosimilars can be up to 50 percent less expensive than the originator. This means that more patients will have access to these life-changing treatments, while not needing to stress about being burdened by high drug costs.



To date, two provinces — British Columbia and Alberta — have transitioned patients covered under public drug benefit programs to biosimilars. Many provinces, including Ontario and Quebec, are considering the same policies. Even many private health plans that many Canadians have through their employers are limiting the number of biologics they will cover or are implementing an annual cap or lifetime limit. Given that biologics can cost \$20,000 to \$35,000 a year, such coverage limits could present a financial burden for individuals.

Patient-approved

“Biosimilars have now been available for years and there are many studies and real-world patient data showing that the outcomes are the same when people are switched, including in Europe, and in parts of Canada,” says rheumatologist Dr. Janet Pope. “Switching to a biosimilar shouldn’t be something for patients to fear.”

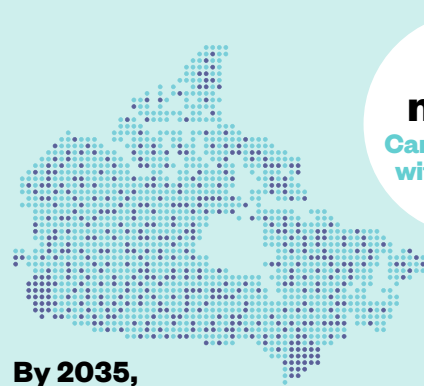
Sixty-four-year-old Brad Hickling of Barrie, ON has struggled with inflammatory arthritis for much of his life. A few years ago, his rheumatologist asked if he would consider switching from his originator biologic to its biosimilar version. “I was nervous because I’d been almost pain-free for the seven years I was on the originator, but I trusted my rheumatologist and the information he provided,” says Hickling. “Transitioning to the biosimilar was seamless.” ■

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Biologics, Biosimilars, and Inflammatory Arthritis

What is inflammatory arthritis (IA)?

IA is a group of conditions wherein the body attacks healthy tissues, particularly around the joints, causing inflammation. Inflammation can also cause stiffness and, if left untreated, can lead to significant, irreparable damage. IA can also cause inflammation in the lungs, eyes, heart, and arteries. This can lead to cardiovascular disease, chronic pneumonia, vision loss, and/or premature death.



By 2035, 1 in 4 Canadians will have arthritis



What are biologics?

Biologics are treatments derived from living cells that target a specific molecule. They’re not made from synthetic chemicals.

What are biosimilars?

Biosimilars are treatments made after a biologic’s patent expires. Any differences between a biosimilar and its reference biologic drug don’t result in differences in safety or efficacy.

Both biologics and biosimilars treat



Rheumatoid arthritis



Ankylosing spondylitis



Psoriatic arthritis



Juvenile arthritis

Health Canada’s rigorous approval process means that patients can have the same confidence in the quality, safety, and efficacy of a biosimilar as any other biologic drug. Structural, functional, and human clinical studies must demonstrate that there are no clinically-meaningful differences.



Overall, biosimilars offer more choice for people living with IA. The first step to discussing whether a biologic or a biosimilar is the right course of treatment starts with a conversation with your rheumatologist.

Source: Health Canada, CAPA

Scleroderma Can Lead to Serious Lung Disease

Advances in medical treatments provide hope for patients with scarring of the lungs caused by scleroderma.

Abigail Cukier

While the cause of scleroderma is unknown, it's believed that a genetic predisposition combined with a stressful event, such as an infection, triggers your immune system to attack itself, says Dr. Shane Shapera, Program Director of the Interstitial Lung Disease Clinic at Toronto General Hospital.

Scleroderma most often affects women between the ages of 30 and 50. Symptoms vary depending on what area of the body the disease affects, such as the skin, muscles, blood vessels, or internal organs. Symptoms can include hardening of the skin, painful joints, heartburn, nausea, and fatigue.

When scleroderma affects the lungs, it causes pulmonary hypertension, leading to shortness of breath, fatigue, and chest pain, or pulmonary fibrosis, in which the lungs become scarred and breathing becomes increasingly difficult.

"The scarring is progressive and so patients with scleroderma will get worse," says

Dr. Shapera. "We think that about half of patients with scleroderma will get pulmonary fibrosis, which is one of the leading causes of death in people with scleroderma."

There's no cure for pulmonary fibrosis and treatments seek to relieve the symptoms. In 2019, Health Canada approved the first treatment shown to slow the speed of lung scarring. It's expensive and remains difficult to access, but as the Canadian Agency for Drugs and Technologies in Health (CADTH) has recommended that provincial health plans cover treatment costs for patients with progressive fibrotic interstitial lung disease (ILD) and scleroderma, Dr. Shapera is optimistic that the Government of Ontario will start to cover the drug under its provincial drug plan.

Experts and professionals in the space are advocating strongly for provincial coverage as soon as possible. "We can't wait much longer. This treatment shifts the paradigm in how we treat patients with pulmonary fibrosis," says Dr. Shapera. "It offers hope of slowing down the disease." ■



Dr. Shane Shapera
Program Director of the Interstitial Lung Disease Clinic, Toronto General Hospital



To learn more about scleroderma, visit [hardword.ca](https://www.hardword.ca).

This article was sponsored by the **Scleroderma Society of Ontario**.

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Is a Pain-Free Future in Reach for Kids with Arthritis?

David Porte

Every year, one in 1,000 children in Canada will be diagnosed with juvenile arthritis (JA) and up to 60 percent of them, like my daughter, Cassie, will suffer with uncontrolled and severe disease.

This means, for the most part, she can dance and play like any kid, but will likely rely on long-term, costly immune therapies for her whole life, like the biologics she's taken since she was two years old.

As a parent, you can't help but ask — will my child face irreversible joint damage? Will she require surgeries? Will she be able to reach her full potential?

With the rapid introduction of biosimilars (drugs that are very close in structure and function to biologics) for the treatment of JA across Canada, parents also have questions about the use of these new medications for children.

In Canada, there are kids with arthritis who still don't have access to life-changing medications, and many specialty clinics still can't get funding for critical equipment and services like ultrasounds, physiotherapy, and nursing. How can I know that the safety and future of my child will be a priority?

ment to select cost-effective treatments for arthritis, we'll continue to advocate for kids.

That means calling for all kids with JA to have access to medications with appropriate pediatric dosing and best-tolerated administration for their growing bodies. It also means advocating for a clear mandate to be put in place to carefully track the outcomes of children with arthritis taking these new medications.

At Cassie + Friends, we're more optimistic than ever about a pain-free future for all kids with rheumatic disease. We invite affected youth, families, health care practitioners, educators, and other friends, to help make it a reality. ■



David Porte
Board Chair + Parent, Cassie + Friends Society for Children with Juvenile Arthritis & Other Rheumatic Diseases

To join our mission and donate, visit [cassieandfriends.ca](https://www.cassieandfriends.ca).

This article was sponsored by **Cassie + Friends**.

JA is the most common cause of chronic disability in kids in Canada
While we support the efforts of govern-



A Long-Lasting Solution for Pain Relief Is Here

Those who suffer from acute and chronic pain have found relief with topical treatment by Kalaya.

Katherine Capellacci

Just about everyone has experienced bodily pain in one form or another. Whether it's mild back pain or severe arthritis, pain is our body's way of telling us that something's wrong. It can take many forms — acute pain can arrive with a sudden sharpness, while chronic pain can be debilitating long-term.

While the sources of different people's pains may differ, there's no shortage of options that claim to help. Whether it's therapy or medication, it can be difficult to find long-lasting relief.

Long-lasting pain relief with Kalaya

The health and wellness brand Kalaya is dramatically innovating pain management. Proudly Canadian, the brand was created and is managed by medical professionals who develop and test all of the products.

Kalaya's 6X collection is an affordable, topical solution to many types of pain, including joint, muscle, back and arthritis.

When tested, all of the participants from the study using the 6X formulation experienced pain improvement.¹ The 6X Extra Strength Pain Relief is available as a cream, massager, and spray, and is a registered natural health product with Health Canada. Its formulation has uniquely-combined arnica, menthol, methyl salicylate, eucalyptus, methylsulfonylmethane, and camphor to create an anti-inflammatory, pain-blocking solution. This superior blend has been medically proven to provide fast-acting, long-lasting pain relief.

Alleviation from acute and chronic pain is finally possible with Kalaya's 6X formulation. ■

To read testimonials and learn more, visit [kalaya.ca](https://www.kalaya.ca).

This article was sponsored by **Kalaya**.

¹ Pain Relief Study <https://www.avariahb.com/pain-relief-study/>

5 Tips for Dealing with Flares

Imagine feeling good one day and waking up in debilitating pain the next. People with inflammatory arthritis know this experience well: the onset of a flare.

It's a period of increased disease activity where heat, pain, stiffness, and fatigue intensify. A flare can last days or even weeks and can disrupt a person's life.

At Arthritis Research Canada, we conduct research that gives people the tools and treatments to live life to the fullest despite arthritis. Check out these five tips for managing a flare from someone who has lived with rheumatoid arthritis for years:

1 Don't panic

Stress will make the flare worse. Sit down and don't think about anything for five minutes — like a mini meditation session. Have a coping plan in place ahead of time in case you can't see your physician.

2 Get organized

Plan and leave room for unpredictability. Rank your tasks. Try not to do everything at once. And don't be afraid to cancel plans when a flare strikes.

3 Occupy yourself

Distraction is your friend. Get into a movie, read a book, or occupy yourself with

something that engages your mind but is easy on the body. Try not to focus on the flare or the pain itself. Flares can be mentally draining, especially when you fixate on the pain.

4 Indulge in a home spa treatment

Pretend that you're at the spa. Take a hot bath. If you have a paraffin dip at home, it can relieve joint pain and stiffness in your hands, feet, and elbows.

5 Arthritis Research Can Help

Arthritis patients face many challenges that impact their daily lives and threaten their overall quality of life — like flares. At Arthritis Research Canada, we may not be able to cure arthritis, but we can reduce pain, and prevent joint deformities and the disability that comes with them. ■

Want to learn more about arthritis research? Visit [arthritisresearch.ca/current-research](https://www.arthritisresearch.ca/current-research).

This article was sponsored by **Arthritis Research Canada**.

