



Patient Resources

Advocacy in Rheumatology

What is advocacy?

Advocacy, as defined by the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, is the “act or process of supporting a cause or proposal.” Individuals often advocate, or defend and support, causes that are important and relevant to them.

Who can be an advocate?

Anyone can be an advocate. Advocates may be individuals with rheumatic conditions, caregivers, friends and family members of individuals with rheumatic conditions, physicians, administrative staff, and more.

Why should I become an advocate?

You may not realize it, but you already are an advocate. If you or someone you love is living with a rheumatic condition, it is likely that you have taken it upon yourself to better understand the condition and have made others aware of the condition, its symptoms and how it affects your lifestyle. This is considered ‘passive advocacy’ because you’re doing it without realizing.

Active advocacy is very important; it not only raises awareness about rheumatic conditions, it aims to advance research in the field of rheumatology by supporting increased funding, fighting for increased access to lower-cost medications, and enhancing the status of rheumatology in health care.

What is required of me to become an ‘active advocate’?

There are many opportunities to become an active advocate, consider one or more of the following:

1. Follow one policy issue related to rheumatology that attracts your interest. Try to stay up-to-date on the subject by reading news articles and editorials, or watching videos and presentations.
2. Read one rheumatology journal or magazine every month, cover-to-cover. Skim the table of contents to read articles only of special interest.
3. When you encounter a person who needs an advocate, take one action on his or her behalf. This individual may be living with rheumatic condition, a caregiver, a friend, family member or acquaintance.
4. Attend a local state legislative meeting in your community.
5. Contact your elected officials by phone, email, letter, and social media. Personalize your message and bring to their attention the issues that are important to you.
6. Sign up to be an advocate at one of the following organizations:

[The American College of Rheumatology's Simple Tasks Campaign](#)

[CreakyJoints: The 50-State Network](#)

[The Arthritis Foundation](#)