



RHEUMATIC DISEASE
AWARENESS MONTH **DIGITAL TOOLKIT**

SPONDYLITIS
LUPUS GOUT
**hundreds
of diseases.**

JIA Sjögren's
OSTEOARTHRITIS

**one
voice.**

SEPTEMBER IS
RHEUMATIC DISEASE AWARENESS MONTH



AMERICAN COLLEGE
OF RHEUMATOLOGY
EDUCATION • TREATMENT • RESEARCH



A Public Awareness Campaign
from the American College of Rheumatology



BLOG POST

Organizations are encouraged to download and tailor the following blog post when sharing information about Rheumatic Disease Awareness Month. Placeholders are included in the template for those who wish to tailor the information to a specific rheumatic disease.



[Sample Blog Post](#)

Help Us Raise Awareness for *[Insert Disease Name]* this September!

Mark your calendars: **September is the first annual Rheumatic Disease Awareness Month (RDAM)!** We're excited to support this important awareness month with the American College of Rheumatology and its national public awareness campaign, Simple Tasks. The theme for RDM 2016 is **"Hundreds of Diseases, One Voice."** What better time to raise awareness about *[Insert disease name]*? Unfortunately, not many people fully understand *[Insert disease name]* symptoms and its complications – but speaking together as one voice, we can change that during RDM 2016!

How Can I Participate in RDM 2016?

The Simple Tasks website (www.SimpleTasks.org) and the official RDM 2016 hashtag, **#RDAM**, are great places to start. On the website you will find information about how to participate in RDM 2016 on social media, ideas for hosting a local awareness event, instructions for conducting outreach to your local media and lawmakers, and more!

Here is additional information about *[Insert disease name]* that we encourage you to share during RDM 2016:

What is *[Insert Disease Name]*?

[In this section, describe the disease, its symptoms, and the complications it poses to those affected.]

Who is affected by *[Insert Disease Name]*?

[In this section, provide a profile of the kinds of people who suffer from the disease and who is at risk. You can also mention the number of Americans affected by it. The American College of Rheumatology's Diseases & Conditions webpage may be a useful reference for this section.]

What is *[Insert Your Organization Name]* doing for RDM 2016?

[In this section, introduce any initiatives, events, new research opportunities, or call to action your organization is participating in. Indicate why it is important, and why people should raise awareness around this disease.]

Thanks for helping us spread awareness during Rheumatic Disease Awareness Month!

raise awareness.

SPONDYLITIS
LUPUS
GOUT
JIA Sjögren's
OSTEOARTHRITIS
temporal arteritis
Behçet's Disease



SOCIAL MEDIA RESOURCES

Help us spread the word about Rheumatic Disease Awareness Month online! Organizations and individuals are encouraged to utilize the following resources when sharing information on your websites or social media channels.

HASHTAG

- If you are sharing information about rheumatic diseases on social media in September, be sure to use our official hashtag, **#RDAM**.

PROFILE PHOTO

- Help spread the word about Rheumatic Disease Awareness Month by changing your social media profile photo to the graphic below.



September is
**RHEUMATIC
DISEASE
AWARENESS
MONTH**

SHARE A RHEUM SELFIE

- Rheumatic diseases impact individuals from all different walks of life. Help put a face to your rheumatic disease and your personal experience by sharing a "Rheum Selfie" on Facebook or Twitter using the hashtag **#RheumSelfie!**

CONNECT WITH ACR AND SIMPLE TASKS ON SOCIAL MEDIA

- ACR on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/Rheumatology/>
- ACR on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/ACRrheum>
- ACR on LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/american-college-of-rheumatology>
- ACR on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/user/AmerCollRheumatology>
- Simple Tasks on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/ACRSimpleTasks/>
- Simple Tasks on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/ACRSimpleTasks>
- Simple Tasks on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/user/ACRSimpleTasks>

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utilize
resources.

SPONDYLITIS
Lupus GOUT
JIA Sjögren's
OSTEOARTHRITIS
temporal arteritis
Behçet's Disease



SOCIAL MEDIA RESOURCES *continued*

SAMPLE SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS

Organizations and individuals are encouraged to download, tailor, and share the following social media posts in your communications about RDAM 2016.



[Sample Social Media Posts](#)

Sample Social Media Posts

Facebook

- September is Rheumatic Disease Awareness Month! *Learn more from the American College of Rheumatology and the Simple Tasks campaign:* <http://ow.ly/jAT6301NSgd> **#RDAM**
- There are more than 100 rheumatic diseases, but together we have one voice! *In honor of Rheumatic Disease Awareness Month, learn how you can advocate for yourself and fellow rheum patients:* <http://ow.ly/jAT6301NSgd> **#RDAM**
- Did you know? Rheumatic diseases are the leading cause of disability in the U.S. *Learn more this Rheumatic Disease Awareness Month:* <http://ow.ly/jAT6301NSgd> **#RDAM**
- Many people living with rheumatic diseases can go years before seeking treatment or receiving a correct diagnosis for their disease. *Learn about the symptoms to watch for during Rheumatic Disease Awareness Month:* <http://ow.ly/jAT6301NSgd> **#RDAM**
- More than 52.5 million Americans live with some form of rheumatic disease, but medical research funding lags far behind other diseases and conditions. *Learn more:* <http://ow.ly/jAT6301NSgd> **#RDAM**
- Did you know? Rheumatic diseases affect children, too! Approximately 300,000 children in the U.S. live with some form of rheumatic disease. *Learn more:* <http://ow.ly/jAT6301NSgd> **#RDAM**

Twitter

- September is #RDAM! *Learn more from @ACRheum & @ACRSimpleTasks:* <http://ow.ly/jAT6301NSgd>
- There are 100+ rheumatic diseases, but together we have one voice! *Learn how you can advocate:* <http://ow.ly/jAT6301NSgd> **#RDAM**
- Did you know? Rheumatic diseases are the leading cause of disability in America <http://ow.ly/jAT6301NSgd> **#RDAM**
- Many w/ rheumatic diseases go years before treatment or diagnosis occur. *Help raise awareness:* <http://ow.ly/jAT6301NSgd> **#RDAM**
- Research funding for rheumatic diseases lags behind other diseases & conditions. *Learn more:* <http://ow.ly/jAT6301NSgd> **#RDAM**
- Did you know? 300,000 U.S. children live with some form of rheumatic disease. *Learn more:* <http://ow.ly/jAT6301NSgd> **#RDAM**



Email Alert

Organizations are encouraged to download and tailor the following email alert to send to your distribution lists. Placeholders are included for those that wish to include information about a specific rheumatic disease.



[Sample Email Alert](#)

Subject: September Is Rheumatic Disease Awareness Month – Get Involved!

Rheumatic diseases are the leading cause of disability in America, affecting nearly one in four Americans.

Help us spread awareness for *[Insert disease name]* and other rheumatic diseases this September as *[Insert Organization Name]* joins the American College of Rheumatology and Simple Tasks in celebrating the first annual **Rheumatic Disease Awareness Month (RDAM)**!

The theme for RDAM 2016 is **“Hundreds of Diseases. One Voice.”** Speaking as one voice, we can improve the public’s understanding of *[Insert disease name]* and other rheumatic diseases and advance the health and well-being of millions of Americans living with rheumatic diseases.

How to Participate in RDAM 2016

Visit the Simple Tasks website (www.SimpleTasks.org), where you can find everything you need to share rheumatic disease information on social media, host a local awareness event, post a **#RheumSelfie**, advocate for rheumatic disease patients, and more!

improve
understanding.

SPONDYLITIS
LUPUS
GOUT
JIA
Sjögren's
OSTEOARTHRITIS
temporal arteritis
Behçet's Disease



Host a Community Event

Hosting an event is an excellent way to educate your local community about rheumatic diseases. There are numerous ways to raise awareness in your hometown. Here are a few tips and ideas for getting started!

✓ Bring Rheumatic Disease Awareness to an Existing Event

Health and community organizations in your town may host health fairs, events, or talks that aim to connect people to local healthcare resources. Research what types of events are going on in your community and connect with the organizers to provide information about rheumatic diseases to attendees. For example, offer to run a rheumatic disease awareness booth and bring materials from this toolkit.

✓ Create Your Own Educational Event

Organize your own event about rheumatic disease awareness. Find space in a community center or other public place and utilize the material provided in this toolkit. Encourage attendees to start a group discussion and share tips. Consider organizing the event around a speaker who has been impacted by rheumatic disease or a local rheumatologist who can provide clinical information to attendees.

✓ Spread the Word!

Not interested in attending or hosting an event? No problem – provide the flyers and other resources in this toolkit to your community health center, local library, or YMCA. You never know who might be interested in learning more!

provide
resources.

SPONDYLITIS
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temporal arteritis
Behçet's Disease



FACT SHEETS

Organizations and individuals are encouraged to download and share the following fact sheets as you communicate about Rheumatic Disease Awareness Month.

[About Rheumatic Disease Awareness Month](#)

[Rheumatic Diseases: An Overview](#)



[Rheumatic Diseases: Cost, Impact, and Healthcare Challenges](#)

[Infographic - Rheumatic Diseases: Cost and Impact](#)

[Arthritis Does That?](#)

About Rheumatic Disease Awareness Month

- September 2016 marks the first annual Rheumatic Disease Awareness Month (RDAM 2016).
- RDAM 2016 is sponsored by the American College of Rheumatology (ACR), the nation's leading association representing rheumatologists and rheumatology health professionals, and by Simple Tasks, the ACR's national public awareness campaign.
- RDAM was created to raise awareness about diseases like lupus, gout, rheumatoid arthritis and the 100+ lesser known rheumatic diseases.
- RDAM seeks to increase public understanding and awareness of the symptoms, risk factors, treatment options, personal and economic impact, and lifestyle and healthcare challenges associated with rheumatic diseases.
- RDAM is an opportunity for concerned individuals and groups to advocate for the health and wellbeing of those living with rheumatic disease and to advance healthcare policies that help patients access safe, affordable, and effective healthcare.
- All concerned individuals and organizations, including patients, patient organizations, medical professional groups, lawmakers, members of the media, and friends and family members of those affected by rheumatic diseases, are encouraged to participate in RDAM.
- The theme for RDAM 2016 is, **"Hundreds of Diseases. One Voice."** Speaking as one voice, we can improve the public's understanding of rheumatic diseases and advance the health and well-being of millions of Americans living with rheumatic diseases.
- RDAM 2016 will be celebrated throughout the month of September. The ACR and Simple Tasks have developed a number of activities, resources, and tools to help individuals and organizations participate in RDAM. More information can be found on the Simple Tasks website at www.SimpleTasks.org.

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communicate.

SPONDYLITIS
Lupus GOUT
JIA Sjögren's
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temporal arteritis
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FACT SHEETS *continued*

Rheumatic Diseases: An Overview

- Rheumatic diseases are much more than the aches and pains of getting older. More than 52.5 million Americans – young and old – live with painful, debilitating, and life-threatening rheumatic diseases.
- Symptoms of rheumatic diseases vary depending on the individual and the disease, but may include joint or muscle pain, inflammation, swelling, redness or stiffness; eye irritation and inflammation; general fatigue, malaise, and fevers; hair loss; dry eyes or mouth; chest pain; and seizures or stroke.
- Individuals living with rheumatic diseases may be at increased risk of depression, anxiety, and memory loss; cancer; heart disease, heart attack, heart failure, and abnormal heart rhythms; kidney failure and diabetes; eye irritation and inflammation; lung diseases and pulmonary fibrosis; aorta aneurysms; skin hardening or psoriasis; miscarriages or stillbirths; anemia; and nerve compression or peripheral neuropathy. For more information, see the fact sheet, [“Arthritis Does That?”](#)
- Rheumatic diseases are the number one cause of disability in the United States. In fact, inflammatory rheumatic diseases cause more disability in America than heart disease, cancer, or diabetes.
- While there is no cure for rheumatic disease, early intervention and treatment provided by a trained rheumatologist can help patients manage symptoms and maintain a normal quality of life.

Rheumatic Diseases: Cost, Impact, and Healthcare Challenges

Prevalence and Impact of Rheumatic Disease

- Rheumatic diseases are the leading cause of disability in America.
- More than 52.5 million Americans – nearly one in four Americans – live with some form of rheumatic disease.
- Experts estimate 78 million (26%) adults aged 18 or older will have doctor-diagnosed arthritis by the year 2040.
- Eleven million Americans live with inflammatory rheumatic diseases such as rheumatoid arthritis (RA), gout, and lupus.
- 300,000 children live with some form of rheumatic disease.
- Research shows that rheumatic disease can shorten a lifespan by up to 15 years.

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FACT SHEETS *continued*

Cost of Rheumatic Disease

- Rheumatic diseases cost the U.S. healthcare system and economy an estimated \$128 billion annually.
- The cost of rheumatic disease is expected to rise as the population ages.
- Rheumatic diseases are responsible for approximately \$80.8 billion in annual medical expenditures.
- Rheumatic diseases are responsible for approximately \$47 billion in annual indirect costs, such as lost earnings.

Healthcare Challenges for People Living with Rheumatic Diseases

- Due to lack of understanding about rheumatic disease and the complex and varied symptoms, many people living with rheumatic diseases can go years before seeking treatment or receiving a correct diagnosis for their disease.
- Once diagnosed, many patients struggle to access and afford effective care and treatments for their rheumatic diseases.
- Medical research funding – our best hope for new rheumatic disease treatments and, ultimately, cures – lags far behind other diseases and conditions.
- Due to the current shortage of specialists trained to provide rheumatology care, including pediatric rheumatologists, many patients experience long wait or travel times to see a rheumatologist.
- Exorbitant patient co-pays for specialty therapies, along with prior authorization, step therapy, and “fail-first” requirements from insurers, threaten patients’ ability to access high-quality rheumatic disease care.



FLYER

Organizations and individuals are encouraged to download, print, post, and distribute the following flyer within your local communities. Consider posting the flyer at your local rheumatologist's office, support group, community health center, community bulletin boards, YMCA, and other public and community spaces where there is permission to post.



Flyer (8.5x11)

SPONDYLITIS
LUPUS
GOUT
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RHEUMATIC DISEASE AWARENESS MONTH

RHEUMATIC DISEASE AWARENESS MONTH SEPTEMBER 2016

More than 52.5 million Americans live with painful and debilitating rheumatic diseases like rheumatoid arthritis, osteoarthritis, lupus, gout, scleroderma, and juvenile idiopathic arthritis. Although there is no cure for rheumatic disease, early intervention and access to effective care and treatments can dramatically improve the quality of life for people living with rheumatic diseases.

September 2016 Is Rheumatic Disease Awareness Month. Join the American College of Rheumatology and Simple Tasks as we work to improve the public's understanding of rheumatic diseases and advance the health and well-being of millions of Americans.

JOIN US FOR RDRAM 2016!

GET INVOLVED!

Share Your Story

Host an Event

Take a #RheumSelfie

Contact Your Lawmaker

And Much More!

AMERICAN COLLEGE
OF RHEUMATOLOGY
EDUCATION • TREATMENT • RESEARCH

www.SimpleTasks.org/rheumatic-disease-awareness-month
#RDRAM

simple tasks
A Public Awareness Campaign
from the American College of Rheumatology



LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Sending a letter to the editor of your local newspaper is an effective way to increase awareness about rheumatic diseases in your local community. Click [here](#) to send a pre-drafted letter directly to your hometown newspaper! Or, download and submit the letter below to the Letters editor at your local newspaper via email. If sending via email, be sure to include your home address and a contact phone number.



[Sample Letter to the Editor](#)

To The Editor:

Many community members might be surprised to learn that rheumatic diseases are the nation's leading cause of disability. In fact, nearly one in four Americans – young and old – live with a painful, debilitating, and chronic rheumatic disease. Arthritis is the most well-known rheumatic disease, but there are more than 100 conditions – including lupus, gout, Lyme disease, and juvenile idiopathic arthritis.

Although the lifelong effects of these conditions can be devastating, the good news is that early intervention and prompt treatment by a rheumatologist can help patients manage pain and avoid long-term disability.

Unfortunately, it is not uncommon for people living with rheumatic diseases to experience pain and other mysterious symptoms for years before seeking treatment or receiving a correct diagnosis. As we recognize Rheumatic Disease Awareness Month this September, I encourage anyone experiencing persistent, chronic pain to learn more about rheumatic disease symptoms and whether you might benefit from visiting a trained specialist. The American College of Rheumatology offers a clearinghouse of useful information on its Simple Tasks (www.SimpleTasks.org) website.

Through better public awareness, we can help more people get the timely and effective care they need to manage pain and maintain a normal quality of life.

[Insert Your Full Name]

[Insert Your City of Residence]

increase
understanding.

SPONDYLITIS
lupus GOUT
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PRESS RELEASE

Organizations are encouraged to download and tailor the following press release to share with your local media outlets via email. Placeholders are included for additional information from your organization.



[Sample Press Release](#)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: *[Insert Name]*
[Insert Email]
[Insert Phone Number]

[Insert Organization Name] Participates in First Annual Rheumatic Disease Awareness Month Nation's Leading Cause of Disability in the Spotlight this September

CITY, STATE (DATE) – *[Insert Organization Name]* is helping raise awareness about rheumatic diseases in *[Insert City or State]* this September during the first annual Rheumatic Disease Awareness Month, sponsored by the [American College of Rheumatology](#) (ACR) and its national public awareness campaign, [Simple Tasks](#).

More than 52.5 million Americans – young and old – live with painful, debilitating, and life-threatening rheumatic diseases, including rheumatoid arthritis (RA), gout, lupus, Sjögren's syndrome, ankylosing spondylitis, and juvenile idiopathic arthritis. Rheumatic diseases are the nation's leading cause of disability, generating more than \$128 billion in health costs each year. These diseases often strike individuals in the prime of their lives and can lead to long-term disability and early death if not treated early and effectively.

Because rheumatic disease symptoms can be difficult to pinpoint and are sometimes dismissed as merely the aches and pains of getting older, people living with these diseases may go years before seeking treatment or receiving a correct diagnosis. Although there is no cure for rheumatic disease, early intervention by a trained rheumatologist can help patients manage symptoms and maintain a normal quality of life.

Parents of young children should also be wary of any inexplicable joint pain. An estimated 300,000 children live with painful juvenile idiopathic arthritis, which can lead to physical disability, blindness, and other complications if not treated early.

Symptoms of rheumatic disease vary by person and condition but may include:

- Joint or muscle pain, inflammation, swelling, redness, or stiffness;
- Eye irritation and inflammation;
- General fatigue, malaise, and fevers;
- Hair loss;
- Dry eyes or mouth;
- Chest pain; and
- Seizures or stroke.

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PRESS RELEASE *continued*

[Optional: Insert a paragraph about specific types of patients or diseases your organization supports.]

"No one should have to live with chronic, persistent, and mysterious pain," said Dr. Joan Von Feldt, MD, MEd, president of the American College of Rheumatology (ACR). "Seeing a rheumatologist within the first weeks and months of disease onset – what rheumatologists call the 'window of opportunity' – can dramatically improve long-term outcomes for patients, so it is important to know what symptoms to look for and when to ask for a referral to a trained specialist."

Once diagnosed, people living with rheumatic diseases can face significant healthcare obstacles, including a shortage of trained rheumatologists to treat their conditions and expensive co-pays for specialty therapies.

"Unfortunately, too many of our patients struggle to access and afford effective care and treatments for their rheumatic diseases," said Dr. Von Feldt. "Therefore, in addition to increasing awareness about symptoms and treatment options, Rheumatic Disease Awareness Month is also an opportunity to advance the health and well-being of those living with rheumatic disease by advocating for healthcare policies that help patients access safe, affordable, and effective healthcare."

Rheumatic Disease Awareness Month is sponsored by Simple Tasks, a national public awareness campaign from the American College of Rheumatology (ACR). People who are interested in learning more about rheumatic diseases and Rheumatic Disease Awareness Month activities are encouraged to visit the Simple Tasks website at www.SimpleTasks.org.



About *[Insert your organization's boilerplate.]*

About the American College of Rheumatology

The American College of Rheumatology is an international medical society representing more than 9,400 rheumatologists and rheumatology health professionals with a mission to Advance Rheumatology! In doing so, the ACR offers education, research, advocacy, and practice management support to help its members continue their innovative work and provide quality patient care. Rheumatologists are experts in the diagnosis, management, and treatment of more than 100 different types of arthritis and rheumatic diseases.

participate.

SPONDYLITIS
LUPUS GOUT
JIA Sjögren's
OSTEOARTHRITIS
temporal arteritis
Behçet's Disease



EVENT MEDIA ADVISORY

Media advisories are a concise way to alert your local media about your event or initiative for Rheumatic Disease Awareness Month. Organizations are encouraged to download and tailor the following media advisory template to suit the needs of your event.



[Sample Event Media Advisory](#)

MEDIA ADVISORY

[Insert Organization Name] to Host Rheumatic Disease Awareness Month Event

WHAT: *[Insert Organization Name]* invites the community to attend *[Insert event name or description]* to raise awareness for Rheumatic Disease Awareness Month. *[Insert two to three sentences to describe your event.]*

WHEN: *[Insert the date and time of the event]*

WHO: *[Insert the name of your organization and a brief description]*

WHY: September 2016 marks the first annual Rheumatic Disease Awareness Month. Rheumatic diseases are the nation's leading cause of disability, affecting nearly one in four Americans. More than 52.5 million Americans – young and old – live with painful, debilitating, and life-threatening rheumatic diseases, including rheumatoid arthritis, lupus, gout, and juvenile idiopathic arthritis. Although there is no cure for rheumatic disease, early intervention by a trained rheumatologist can help patients manage symptoms and maintain a normal quality of life.

WHERE: *[Insert event address, telephone number, website]*

LEARN MORE: For more information about the event, contact *[insert media contact name, email, phone]*. For more information about rheumatic diseases and to learn how you can make a difference during Rheumatic Disease Awareness Month, visit the Simple Tasks website at www.SimpleTasks.org.





NEWSLETTER ARTICLE

Organizations are encouraged to download and tailor the following newsletter article to share via e-newsletters, websites, community bulletin boards, or print newsletters. Brackets are included in the template for those who wish to tailor the information to a specific rheumatic disease.



[Sample Newsletter Article](#)

Help Raise Awareness for *[Insert Disease Name]* this September

September 2016 marks the first annual Rheumatic Disease Awareness Month (RDAM), sponsored by the American College of Rheumatology and its national public awareness campaign, Simple Tasks. RDAAM 2016 is an effort to increase public understanding and awareness of the symptoms, risk factors, treatment options, personal and economic impact, and the lifestyle and healthcare challenges associated with rheumatic diseases. It is also an opportunity to advance the health and well-being of those living with rheumatic disease by advocating for healthcare policies that help patients access safe, affordable, and effective healthcare.

Hundreds of Diseases. One Voice.

The theme of RDAAM 2016 is “**Hundreds of Diseases. One Voice.**” Although there are several existing awareness months for specific rheumatic diseases like arthritis, lupus, and Lyme disease, there has never been an awareness month that is inclusive of the 100+ lesser known diseases – until now. This is an excellent time for our community to raise awareness about *[Insert disease name]*!

How to Get Involved in RDAAM 2016

The Simple Tasks website (www.SimpleTasks.org) is a great place to start. Here you will find information about how to participate in RDAAM 2016 on social media, ideas for hosting a local awareness event, instructions for conducting outreach to your local media and lawmakers, and more!

- ✓ **Host a Local Awareness Event.** The Simple Tasks website has event ideas to get you started!
- ✓ **Send a Letter to the Editor of Your Local Newspaper.** This is a great way to inform community members about *[Insert disease name]* symptoms and treatment options.
- ✓ **Participate on Social Media.** We encourage you to use the official RDAAM hashtag, **#RDAM**, in your social media posts about the month. Simple Tasks will also host weekly #RheumChat Twitter chats on topics related to living with a rheumatic disease. Join one of the chats this September! Or, consider changing your social media profile photo to show solidarity during RDAAM 2016. You can find more information about RDAAM 2016 social media initiatives on the Simple Tasks website.
- ✓ **Take Action.** Write an email to your Congressperson or Senator asking them to support healthcare policies that make it easier for people living with *[Insert disease name]* to access safe and effective treatments. You can quickly and easily send a pre-drafted email from the Simple Tasks website, or draft one of your own! You can also ask your local or state government leaders to issue a Rheumatic Disease Awareness Month proclamation. The proclamation can be downloaded directly from the Simple Tasks website.
- ✓ **Tell Your Friends.** Take this opportunity to share information about *[Insert disease name]* symptoms, treatment options, what it's like to live with rheumatic disease, and other awareness information with your online and offline communities. Knowledge is power, so let's start the conversation!

Thank you in advance for helping us spread awareness during Rheumatic Disease Awareness Month. Speaking together with one voice, we can make a positive difference for people living with *[Insert disease name]*.



#RHEUMCHATS

Simple Tasks hosts a lively monthly Twitter chat on how patients with rheumatic diseases can advocate for their health and other topics related to rheumatic disease. Learn how to join us and find the archived transcripts of our Twitter chats.

Special Edition #RheumChats for Rheumatic Disease Awareness Month

Simple Tasks hosts a monthly Twitter chat focused on ways patients living with rheumatic diseases can advocate for their health, and other topics related to rheumatic disease. Each month Simple Tasks hosts #RheumChat with a different guest organization.

In honor of **Rheumatic Disease Awareness Month**, we will be hosting a #RheumChat each week during the month of September! Learn more about each chat below and at SimpleTasks.org/RheumChat:

Sept. 8

Thursday, Sept. 8 at 1PM ET: Faces of Rheumatic Disease

Sept. 15

Thursday, Sept. 15 at 1PM ET: Living Well with Rheumatic Disease

Sept. 22

Thursday, Sept. 22 at 1PM ET: The Importance of Medical Research

Sept. 29

Thursday, Sept. 29 at 1PM ET: Spotlight on Rare Diseases

join the
conversation.

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2016 CITY/STATE PROCLAMATION

Encourage public officials in your local community or state to issue the following proclamation during Rheumatic Disease Awareness Month.



[2016 Rheumatic Disease Awareness Month Proclamation Template](#)

2016 Rheumatic Disease Awareness Month Proclamation

WHEREAS, rheumatic diseases are chronic, progressive, painful conditions and the leading cause of disability in the United States;

WHEREAS, rheumatic diseases now affect nearly one in four Americans and are expected to affect an estimated 78 million Americans by the year 2040;

WHEREAS, 300,000 children live with some form of rheumatic disease;

WHEREAS, it is estimated that the economic burden of rheumatic disease is at least \$128 billion annually, including more than \$80 billion in medical expenditures and \$47 billion in annual indirect costs such as lost earnings;

WHEREAS, research suggests the cause of rheumatic disease is a combination of genetic and environmental factors, but the exact cause of these diseases is still unknown;

WHEREAS, the symptoms of rheumatic diseases vary depending on the individual and the disease, but may include joint or muscle pain, inflammation, swelling, redness or stiffness, eye irritation and inflammation, general fatigue, malaise, and fevers, hair loss, dry eyes or mouth, chest pain, seizures, or stroke;

WHEREAS, there is currently no cure for rheumatic diseases, but medical research breakthroughs have led to treatments and therapies that can dramatically improve the quality of life for those living with rheumatic diseases;

WHEREAS, rheumatologists, researchers, patients, caregivers, and other advocates are working to improve the quality of life for people living with rheumatic diseases;

WHEREAS, healthcare policies, research, education, and community support services are needed to ensure patients receive timely, affordable, safe and effective treatments and have access to trained rheumatologists who can provide quality care to those living with these diseases;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, _____, **MAYOR/GOVERNOR** of the City/State of _____, do hereby proclaim September as Rheumatic Disease Awareness Month in _____.

Given under my hand in these free United States in the City of _____, on this day of twenty-sixteen, and to which I have caused the Seal of the City/State to be affixed and have made this proclamation public.

Mayor/Governor/Council

Attest:



TIPS FOR CONTACTING LAWMAKERS

Policy decisions in your state and at the national level can have a huge impact on people living with rheumatic diseases.

Become a Patient Advocate!

Policy decisions in your state and at the national level can have a huge impact on people living with rheumatic diseases. Our state and national leaders need to know that their policy decisions can profoundly affect the health, well-being, and quality of life of people living with rheumatic diseases.

One of the best ways for lawmakers to learn, understand, and care about a policy issue is to hear how it affects their constituents. The more your lawmakers hear from you about policy issues affecting your care, the more likely they will be to act on the issues you support.

Get Started Today

- Visit the Take Action page on www.SimpleTasks.org.
- Here, you can:
 - Learn about current policy issues affecting patients with rheumatic diseases;
 - Find contact information for your U.S. Representatives and Senators;
 - Send an email directly to your lawmakers about a current policy issue;
 - Connect with your lawmakers on social media; and
 - Send a letter to your local newspaper about a current policy issue.

Other Ways to Advocate

- Introduce yourself to your lawmaker at a community gathering;
- Invite your lawmaker to attend a local event, like a patient support group;
- Set up a hometown meeting with your lawmaker during a Legislative Recess; and
- Join other patient advocates during [“Advocates for Arthritis,”](#) an annual legislative action day hosted by the American College of Rheumatology.

Ready to Become a Patient Advocate?

- Visit www.SimpleTasks.org to learn more.