



## You play an important part

A rheumatic disease is a chronic condition that one will have for the rest of one's life. No one wants to be considered only as 'the one with rheumatism'. You can help to improve acceptance - that there is room for everyone in the workplace.

Right now, you can make a decisive difference to the colleague who gave you this leaflet. For example, you can show an interest in how it can be challenging to have the condition.

## Rheumatism has many faces

There are over 200 different rheumatic diseases, which can affect people very differently. Also, two people with the same diagnosis may have completely different needs in terms of help, support and medical treatment. Rheumatic diseases can be treated but not cured. Treatment keeps the disease as quiescent as possible.

**Thank you for reading this**



## Dear colleague

You have received this leaflet from one of your colleagues with a rheumatic disease who wants to be open about the disease and what it means for them.

Deciding to tell colleagues about one's rheumatic disease takes a lot of consideration. People primarily want to continue to be regarded as the person they are.

This leaflet may be the best way for your colleague to let you know about their new life situation. Perhaps it is also intended as a starting-point to telling you more. So, please be open to listening if your colleague wants to talk about the condition.

It is not a requirement to tell colleagues about one's illness, so you can consider being told as a statement of trust and confidence.

## Dear colleague

I have a  
**RHEUMATIC  
DISEASE**

## What does it mean to have a rheumatic disease

When one gets a chronic disease, such as inflammatory arthritis, osteoarthritis or gout, finding an effective treatment can take time, as can recognizing that one is chronically ill and that it may be necessary to make changes to one's private and work life. If, as a colleague, you find it difficult to understand, then that is completely natural. It is also difficult for the person with a rheumatic disease to accept themselves.

A rheumatic disease can affect not only one's body, but also one's mood and social life.

People with a rheumatic disease may experience that their energy levels go up or down during the day, it can vary from day to day. One day could be characterised by pain and fatigue, while they may feel fine the next day.

Days that are unpredictable, involving pain, fatigue, etc. can affect one's mood, making the person perhaps more silent and withdrawn or even short-tempered.

Many people with a rheumatic disease need to prioritize their physical and mental energies. Therefore, it can sometimes be difficult to have enough surplus energy to participate in social events outside of working hours.

People with a rheumatic disease have to adjust their activity levels every day, depending on how the day 'pans out'. This means that it might be necessary to cut back on activities with colleagues for a while.

## What you need to know about rheumatic diseases

In addition to the disadvantages caused by the disease, your colleague may have a number of additional challenges:

- They can often experience an overwhelming tiredness (fatigue), stiffness or pain, felt either during the day or around the clock. The fatigue is not alleviated by sleep, but if small breaks can be taken during the working day, it can make a big difference.
- Pain and fatigue can affect how well one concentrates.
- It may also be that your colleague might find it difficult – or it gets increasingly harder – to carry out certain tasks, including for example driving a car, standing or sitting for long periods of time or holding small objects or tools.

As a colleague, you can help by being accepting, if your colleague with a rheumatic disease participates on a more moderate level or is forced to cancel events.

Often, you can't tell from a colleague that they have a rheumatic disease. It can therefore be difficult for family, colleagues and the employer to understand that the person concerned may have special needs.

Today, there are good opportunities for effective medical treatment and both inpatient and outpatient rehabilitation initiatives.

