**Website - Bios for patient stories**

Linda, 49, ACT

I was a very active and sporty child. I was told I had growing pains a lot and my joints were very flexible. I have a significant familial history of autoimmune disorders and arthritis including rheumatoid arthritis (RA), polymyalgia rheumatica, gout and osteoarthritis. In my late 20's I started having pain in my left index finger. It was hot, stiff and swollen. It took 2 years for my GP to convince me that joint pain at 30 was not normal and I had a rheumatology review. By age 32 all the joints in my hands were affected, progressing to both rists, elbows and shoulders by age 34. My RA continued to progress especially after the birth of my 2 sons, despite trying various medications, job change, taking supplements and diet changes. In the past 2 years flares have been more frequent, and I have developed bursitis in my hips, knees and shoulder, Raynaud’s disease and chronic gastritis. My RA is now in my jaw and ears. My chronic pain makes me tired, cranky, frustrated, but also strong and determined. I cannot work more than 10 hours per week as a nurse and I have to pace, plan or modify my activities and cancel things regularly. Although I have had RA for 17 years now and continue to face the same challenges every day, I’ve learnt to cope/live with them. I listen to my body, can tell when a flare is coming, how far to push my body and when to give in, ask for help and take it easy. Regular exercise, aquatic physio, eating a varied diet, having good sleep habits, taking medications, regular rheumatology review and doing what I can when I can seems to be a good recipe for now.