

A Day in the Life



of an Autoimmune Arthritis Patient

Created by the International Foundation for Autoimmune Arthritis



Parking, walking, pushing, grabbing, lifting, loading, unloading... there is a lot of energy that goes into something as common as grocery shopping. How can you best manage your shopping experience without aggravating your Autoimmune Arthritis? Let's learn!

Grocery Shopping

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A Surprising Dilemma



It's not uncommon for an Autoimmune Arthritis patient to make several trips to the store a week, especially if they live alone or don't have anyone to help carrying, loading and unloading, and putting items away. Tasks such as lifting, reaching, grabbing, and bending can be quite challenging at times, particularly when the disease is flaring.

So let's pretend for a moment that you are a 30 year old patient with Autoimmune Arthritis, you just finished working for the day and are experiencing terrible fatigue, a low grade fever, and your achy all over, mimicking the flu. Yes, it's a flare coming on, but you need to stop at the market because there is nothing in the refrigerator and you prefer not to order in. Plus, the dog needs food and you are out of distilled water, two items that weigh a few pounds, which immediately causes concern. In addition, no one is at home to help carry the groceries inside so you'll have to think about how much energy and strength to use while at the store to ensure you can get the groceries from the car to the house. Good news! You have your canvas shoulder bags in the car so carrying some of the heavy items at least won't hurt your hands.

Now, add one more element to this situation. You look completely normal.

As you make it through the store you decide to grab the small bag of dog food and purchase the heavier one when you are out of your flare. You opt for some fresh, organic vegetables and lean chicken, as many foods can cause more inflammation and make you feel even worse.

While waiting in the check out line, your feet start to ache, like a sprain, and your wrists are throbbing. As you make your way to pay, the bagger politely asks, "Would you like help out with that, miss?"

What do you say? You know you need the help. You know pushing that cart and loading those heavy items into your car will add to the strain of getting them into the house once you get home. Those two situations combined can antagonize your flare and you'll likely be so tired you'll fall asleep early and miss out on your quality Facebook time. So, what do you choose?

Supporters: The Reality

If you truly put yourself in this position, imagining yourself as a healthy looking 30 year old female, with no visual disability, chances are you said no, you would not accept the help. Most patients do the same. Society trains us to believe that only elderly or visibly disabled people need assistance. What if you said yes? How many people do you think would judge you as "spoiled" or "lazy"?

The bagger and the people in the store you may never see again, so perhaps risking the stern glares and occasional confrontations would be worth it? But what happens when it's the same reaction from a spouse, parent, child, or friend? Patients of Autoimmune Arthritis can remain invisible for several years before the disease could cause disability because the destruction, like any other disease, happens from the inside out.

Unfortunately, by not asking for help you overdid yourself. No Facebook for you tonight.

