

World Arthritis Day: Tennis star Caroline Wozniacki dishes on her toughest opponent and how she manages her disease day by day



Every year on 12 October, the global rheumatology community bands together in recognition of World Arthritis Day. This annual initiative raises awareness of the daily challenges and unmet needs of individuals living with rheumatoid arthritis (RA) and other rheumatic and musculoskeletal diseases (RMDs).

Today, we shine a light on our partner, tennis star and RA patient and *Advantage Hers* ambassador, Caroline Wozniacki as she shares her journey living with RA, being an ambassador for women living with chronic inflammatory diseases, and her advice for those trying to take a more active role in their care today on World Arthritis Day and every day.

1. What advice do you have for patients who are newly diagnosed with RA or other chronic inflammatory diseases?

It's really important to have a specialist such as a rheumatologist. Have open and honest communications with your doctor. Don't be afraid to ask questions about how this diagnosis will impact your work life, your diet and exercise routine, or anything else that is of importance to you. Work closely together on a long-term game plan.

2. Tell us about what symptoms you began experiencing and what led to your rheumatoid arthritis (RA) diagnosis.

I had won the Australian Open in January 2018, but in the lead up to the US Open, in the fall, I began to feel joint soreness, constant fatigue and other unexplained symptoms. I was starting to lose matches I would have been expected to win easily.

One unforgettable day I awoke in such severe pain that my husband had to carry me out of bed; I physically couldn't move. I immediately sought medical attention and consulted multiple doctors. I was told that I was either sore from a heavy tournament schedule, out of shape, may be pregnant, or that it was "all in my head," but I knew my body, and something wasn't right. I finally found a rheumatologist who understood what I was going through and had a reason for these unexplained symptoms, diagnosing me with rheumatoid arthritis.

3. How does RA impact your daily life?

Having overcome the tremendous initial hurdle of receiving a proper diagnosis, I am more knowledgeable about my condition, and I feel like the disease is not controlling me anymore. Instead, I am controlling it. I work every day to manage my rheumatoid arthritis; some days are victories, but others are not. I'm still dealing with the physical and emotional impact of my condition each day, but I've found it helpful to make sure I always get one workout in each day and eat a balanced diet packed with vitamins and nutrients. For me, maintaining an active lifestyle is really important and keeps me feeling my best and ready for my next adventure.



4. What led to your involvement in the Advantage Hers campaign?

As someone living with a chronic inflammatory disease like rheumatoid arthritis, I would never want anyone to think that having a chronic disease diminishes someone's worth or ability to pursue their dreams. For this reason, I'm now spending more time working with, and supporting women living with chronic inflammatory diseases, such as rheumatoid arthritis, axial spondyloarthritis, psoriatic arthritis and psoriasis, through the *Advantage Hers* campaign. I hope *Advantage Hers* will inspire women to take more active and informed roles in shared decision-making about their care, helping them gain and maintain their advantage. It's important to know your health, become your own best advocate, and to work on a long-term game plan with a doctor who understands you.

5. What inspires and empowers you?

My husband has been my number one supporter and he inspires me everyday to get back up when I feel knocked down. It may also be cliché to say, but knowledge is power and I feel extremely fortunate to have found a rheumatologist who helped me establish a long-term, evolving game plan. Being able to now share tools and resources through *Advantage Hers* to help other women living with chronic inflammatory diseases is incredibly rewarding and empowering in its own right. I have been inspired by the women all around the world who have shared their stories with me living with chronic inflammatory disease like RA and I want to continue supporting one another.

6. Why is World Arthritis Day important to you?

World Arthritis Day helps give a voice to our community, allows us to connect with one another, and helps educate the public in general about rheumatic diseases like RA and the invisible symptoms that can greatly impact us.

For more information, visit: AdvantageHers.com