

# Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy (HBOT) and Rheumatoid Arthritis

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Rheumatoid arthritis (RA) can be a tremendous, life-changing challenge, as anyone knows who has it or loves someone who suffers from it. RA is a chronic, systemic autoimmune disorder that causes the immune system to attack the joints, where it causes pain and inflammation (arthritis). It can also lead to the destruction of some organs, such as the lungs and skin. When the immune system attacks the body as in RA, it leads to symptoms ranging from joint pain and stiffness to fatigue. Over time, the joints can become permanently damaged and disfigured. Without proper treatment, this kind of damage can lead to disability. New, targeted therapies in RA provide hope for people with this condition.

International studies are finding that hyperbaric oxygen therapy is markedly superior to the routine treatment of RA. In 1995, the Proceedings of the Eleventh International Congress on Hyperbaric Medicine published the results of one particular study. These results indicated the following effects of hyperbaric oxygen on the disease.

Remission: 23.4%

Obvious effect: 51.4%

Improvement: 16.2%

No effect: 8.1%

The total summarized effective rate of hyperbaric oxygen in treating RA was 91.9%. The authors of the study concluded, "In the treatment we find that hyperbaric oxygen is markedly superior to the routine treatment of rheumatoid arthritis."

Hyperbaric oxygen therapy has become a standard of practice for RA in many countries. Clinical practice has proved that hyperbaric oxygen therapy has good effects on analgesia, lowering blood sedimentation rate, stabilizing immunologic function, and strengthening the body's resistance for eliminating pathogenic factors. It is also beneficial for the repair of the diseased joints.

Hyperbaric oxygen therapy has actually been found to inhibit the development of the disease process. HBOT can suppress inflammation due either to immune factors or infection. Moreover, daily hyperbaric oxygen therapy suppresses the inflammatory response even if the disease is fully developed; however, the treatment of RA with hyperbaric oxygen therapy is more effective in the early stages of the disease.