

Family, Fertility & Thriving With Arthritis



Event Program

- ✓ Muted
- ✓ Q&A
- ✓ Survey
- ✓ Resources available after



Where are you right now?

Just curious & learning

Actively trying to conceive

Already pregnant

Planning for the future



What we'll cover together

01 THE WHY

Our personal journeys. Why this conversation matters.

02 THE WHAT

Medications, fertility, pregnancy, and what nobody told you.

03 THE HOW

Building your care team, your plan, and your support system.

04 THE WHAT IF

Real scenarios, hard questions, and honest answers.

This Webinar is About Family & Fertility

For more in-depth information:

- ✓ [Arthritis.org/health-wellness](https://www.arthritis.org/health-wellness)
- ✓ [Arthritis.org/webinars](https://www.arthritis.org/webinars)
- ✓ [Arthritis.org/podcast](https://www.arthritis.org/podcast)
- ✓ [Arthritis.org/YESTOOL](https://www.arthritis.org/YESTOOL)





Meet Your Guides

K

Kate Stepnick

Patient Advocate | Moderator

Kate navigated fertility and family planning while living with arthritis. Her personal journey is the heart of tonight's conversation.

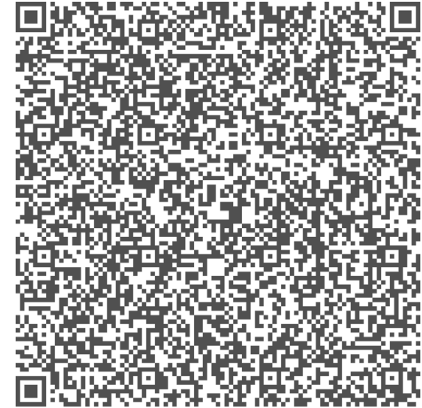
M

Madlina Jonassaint

BSN, RN, CPN, MSHA | Nurse & Doula

A nurse, doula, and chronic illness advocate who bridges the gap between clinical care and whole-person support.

Local Highlights



Philadelphia
June 6, 2026
Montgomery County
Community College

Atlanta
May 2, 2026
Brook Run Park



THE WHY

Why This Conversation Matters

Personal journeys. Real stakes.

K

Kate Stepnick



Moderator | Arthritis Patient

"You may have to go about it a different way, but you deserve the life you want to live"

My Why



Take a deep breath—you are surrounded by people who care.



What Does Family Mean to You?



Marriage & Partnerships

All forms of committed partnership



Biological Children

Natural conception or assisted reproduction



Adoption & Fostering

Opening your home and heart



Blended Families

Bringing families together



THE WHAT

The Facts Nobody Sat Down & Told You

Medications. Fertility. Pregnancy. Contraception.

MADILINA'S STORY



THE WHAT

M

Madilina Jonassaint, BSN, RN, CPN, MSHA

Nurse | Doula | Chronic Illness Advocate

“Nobody should have to piece this together on their own.

That is why I do this work.”

"See the good in everything and celebrate it" Betty Shabaz

What Your Meds May Be Doing

For Women — Plan before you conceive



DMARDs & fetal harm

Some DMARDs (e.g. methotrexate) can harm a developing fetus

Medication washout timing

Washout takes weeks to months — start planning 6+ months ahead

Inflammation & egg quality

Active inflammation affects egg quality & the uterine environment

Biologics & safe options

Many biologics have safe pregnancy profiles — there are options

Always consult your care team before changing any medication.

It's Not Just the Person Carrying The Baby

For Partners — Often overlooked

Sperm count & motility

Sulfasalazine & other meds can reduce sperm count and motility

Washout applies to both

Washout periods apply to BOTH partners — not just the one carrying

Attend the appointment

Partners should attend the rheumatology appointment — their list matters



Pregnancy Changes Things — Sometimes For Better

What to expect in your body



Reduced inflammation

Many RA patients experience reduced inflammation during pregnancy

Flares still happen

Others experience flares — every body is different, plan for both

Postpartum flares are common

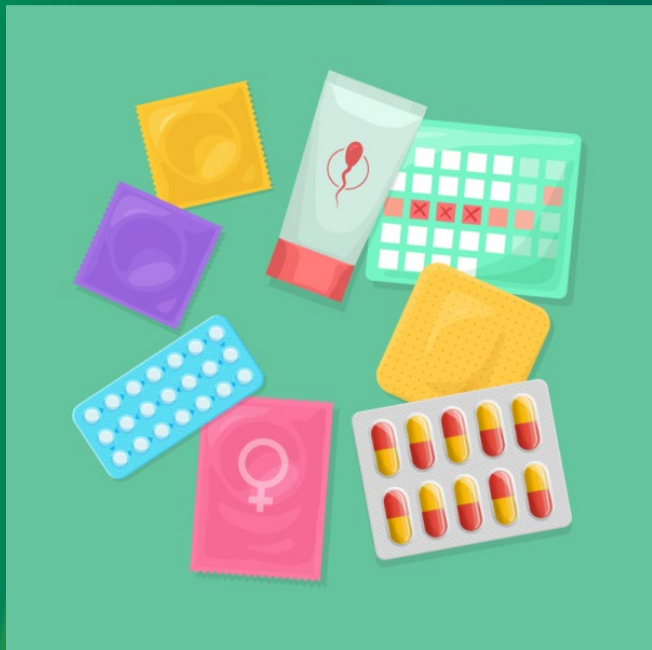
Postpartum flares occur as hormones shift back — plan for this window

Keep your appointments

Keep rheumatology appointments throughout pregnancy — don't cancel them

Planning When You're Not Ready Yet

Not all contraception is equal with arthritis



Estrogen-based pills & clotting

Estrogen-based pills may increase clotting risk on certain biologics

IUDs — highly effective

IUDs (hormonal or copper) are highly effective with no drug interactions

Barrier methods during transitions

Barrier methods work well during medication transition periods

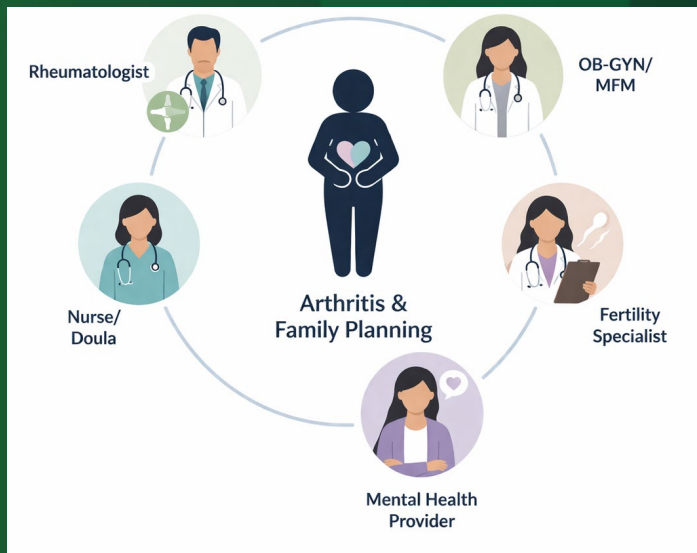
Tell your whole care team

Your whole care team needs to know what contraception you're using

THE HOW

Taking Practical Steps

Your care team. Your roadmap. Your plan.



THE HOW

You need a team that talks to each other.

You are the coordinator.

Rheumatologist

Disease management & med safety

OB/GYN or MFM

Pregnancy & high-risk monitoring

Fertility Specialist

If conception needs support

Mental Health Provider

PPD risk is higher with chronic illness

Nurse / Doula Navigator

Bridges all your providers

Your Doula Is Not A Luxury. She Is Your Anchor.



Sleep & rest are medical

Sleep and rest are medical interventions — depletion worsens inflammation



Build your respite rotation early

3–5 people lined up before baby arrives — not after



Lifestyle = treatment

Nutrition, gentle movement & stress management are your treatment plan



Your health comes first

You cannot pour from an empty vessel — your health comes first, always





THE HOW

Your roadmap is yours to choose.

All four paths require medication planning — start with your rheumatologist

Natural Conception

Preconception med review ideally 6+ months ahead

IVF & Assisted Reproduction

Stimulation injections can interact with your meds — full team required

Adoption & Fostering

Home study may ask about health — prepare your documentation

Surrogacy

Egg retrieval still applies — legal & emotional support are essential

The Fourth Trimester Matters, Too!



Decide meds before your due date



Decide which meds to restart before your due date — have a written plan ready before delivery day.



PPD risk is higher

Identify a mental health provider before delivery



Set up home for joints

Ergonomic changing station, easy-reach everything



Talk to your child

Talk to your child about your condition as they grow — honesty builds trust



THE WHAT IF

Creating Your Support System

What-if planning is the best kind of self-care.

What if...

Anticipating challenges is an act of strength, not fear

I have a flare during pregnancy?

Pre-identify a safe rescue plan with your rheumatologist now

I feel depressed after delivery?

Identify a mental health provider before birth — PPD can be managed when identified early

My provider doesn't listen?

Bring written questions & AF resources — you have the right to a second opinion

My family doesn't understand?

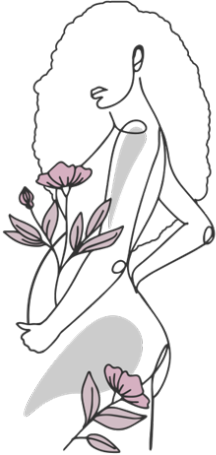
AF has materials to share with loved ones — you don't have to explain alone



The Gift of MaDoula, LLC

Mission:

To leave families feeling more **resilient, confident,** and **prepared**, whether through birth support, postpartum care or essential lifesaving education.



The Gift of
MADOUA

Services provided:

- Prenatal Support
- Labor Support
- Postpartum Support
- Overnight Postpartum Care
- CPR/First Aid Training

*Support starting from 12-week gestation up to 3 months postpartum

Supporting Atlanta Metro and surrounding areas
www.thegiftofmadoula.com



Panel Discussion

Moderator: Maddie

Speakers: Kate & John (Dad & Husband!)



Q & A

Ask anything. There are no wrong questions.

arthritis.org | 1-800-283-7800

You are not
doing this
alone.

THE WHAT IF

Your Arthritis Foundation

arthritis.org

Drug guide, family planning resources, programs

1-800-283-7800

AF Helpline — talk to someone today

Live Yes! Community

LiveYes.Arthritis.org — peer support online

AF Connect Groups

In-person & virtual groups near you

Questions?

1.800.283.7800 / helpline@arthritis.org

- Better understand your disease
- Interpret your insurance coverage
- Connect with other people like you
- Get involved and Volunteer



Upcoming Webinars



April 23: Eating Made Simple for Arthritis


May 28: Pain Relief That Really Works



Register Here:
[Arthritis.org/webinars](https://www.arthritis.org/webinars)





Upcoming Virtual Connect Group Events




7:00 p.m. ET, Tuesday, April 21

Young Adults 26-40 Connect Group


Mindfulness for Resilience and Well-Being



Mindfulness Techniques



Building Resilience



Q&A & Discussion



Family Planning & Parenting with Arthritis

Real Talk - Family Planning & Parenting with Arthritis



Sunday, March 29

4:00 p.m. PT



Explore the more than 50+ in-person and online support groups. Find groups by topic, disease type and location here:



connectgroups.arthritis.org



We Want YOU!

Camp counselor recruitment has begun!

Applicants must:

- ✓ Be 18+
- ✓ Not a parent or guardian of a current camper
- ✓ Complete application
- ✓ Participate in an interview
- ✓ Background check

Help make lasting memories!
Applications close 4/30.
CAMP registration closes 3/31.



Interested?

Email: cdailey@arthritis.org

visit: arthritis.org/ja-camps



Thank You!

Take the survey and let us know what you think!

Join us next time – recordings and resources:

[Arthritis.org/webinars](https://www.arthritis.org/webinars)

