

How to Protect Your Joints

For people with arthritis

Arthritis can be painful and make every day activities difficult. This booklet will show you how to protect your joints. This can help to reduce pain and stop further damage to your joints.

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Your Name: _____

Your Occupational Therapist: _____

↳ Phone: _____

Your Physical Therapist: _____

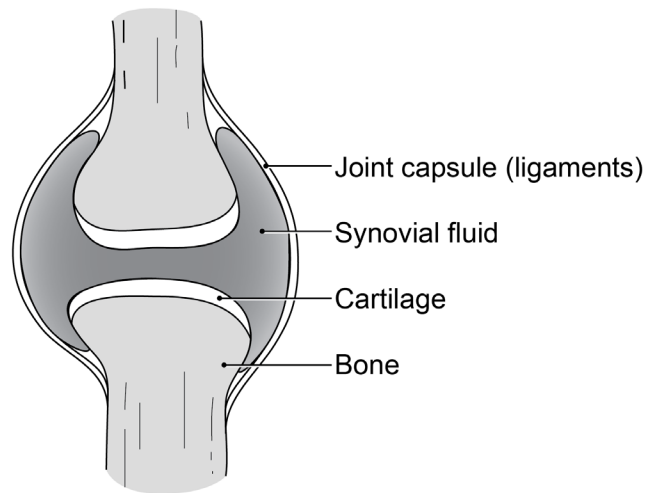
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Joints and arthritis

What does a normal joint look like?

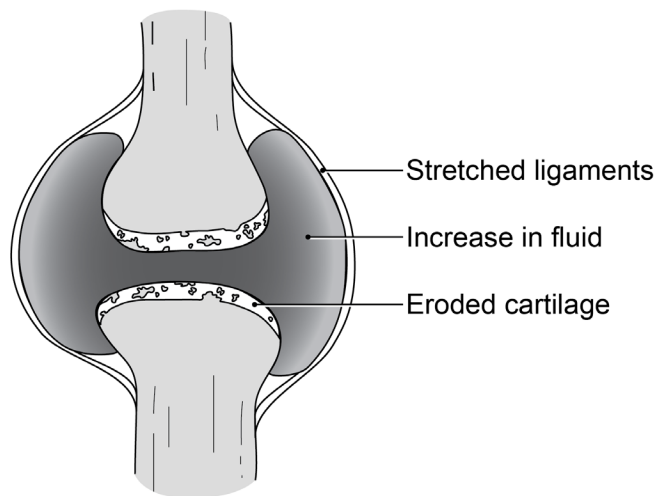
A joint is a joining of 2 bones. Muscles and ligaments hold the bones in place.



What happens with arthritis?

Arthritis can cause swelling of your joints. Swollen joints are often red, warm, painful and hard to use. The swelling can:

- stretch the ligaments
- wear down cartilage and sometimes bone
- make your joints unstable



What causes the swelling?

An injury can cause swelling of your joints. In many cases we do not know what causes it.

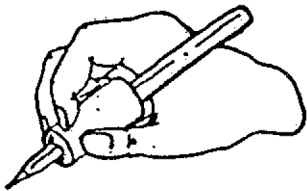
How do I protect my hands and wrists?

It is important to take care of your hands. You use them every day for most of your activities. You may have swelling or pain from arthritis that make it hard to use your hands.

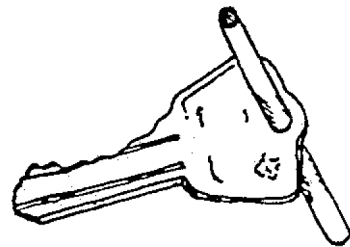
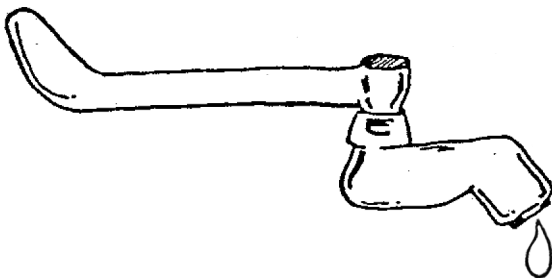
Try these tips. They can make activities easier, and protect your joints.

✓ Do not grip too tightly

- Use large handles

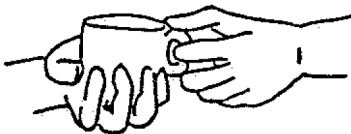


- Use levers to use less force



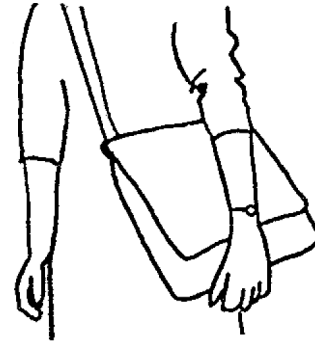
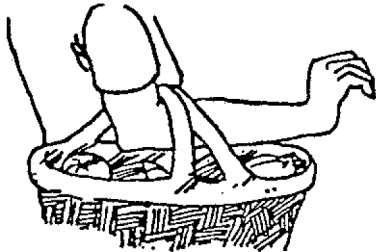
✓ Use two hands

- Use two hands to hold things



✓ **Use larger joints**

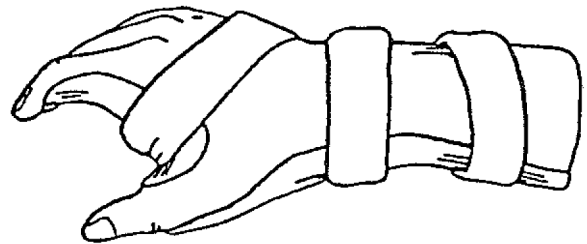
- Carry bags in your arms or over your shoulder (not in your hands)



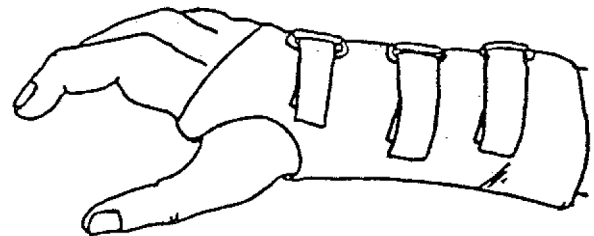
✓ **Use splints to support your hands and wrists**

- Using splints makes it less painful to move. Splints are useful because they allow your joints and muscles to rest. This helps to reduce swelling.

Resting Splints: Wear these at night, or during the day when your hands are swollen and painful.

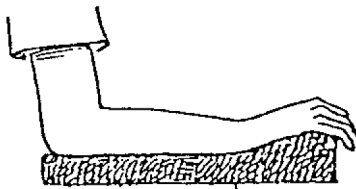


Working Splints: Wear these while you use your hands for activities. They support your wrist.



✓ **Balance rest and activity**

- Break up an activity into short work periods, with rest in between.
- Use one hand and then the other hand (when you carry a bag, dust or use the phone)
- When you hold a pen, small needle or tool, stretch your fingers every
- 10 minutes. This will prevent stiffness and cramping.
- Rest your arm in a good position. Use splints to rest your hand and wrist. Support your hand, wrist and forearm when sitting.



✓ **Find easier ways to work**

- Use lighter objects, like plastic bowls and lighter pots
- Use electric appliances to help you work
 - In the kitchen: Electric knife, can opener, blender, food processor
 - Electric screwdriver and table saw
- Push items. Do not carry them.
 - Use a buggy for groceries. Use a trolley to move items at home or in the yard. Slide the kettle instead of lifting it.
- Keep your knives sharp
- Ask others for help

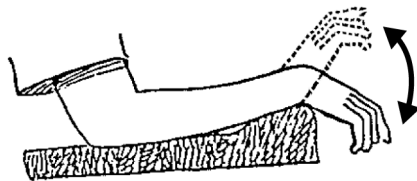
STOP before you have pain!

✓ **Exercise a little and often**

It is good to continue every day activities. It helps to keep your fingers moving. You also need to do other exercises.

Here are some exercises that will make your hands stronger and easier to move. Do these activities at least once a day when your joints are painful and swollen. When they are not painful, try to do more.

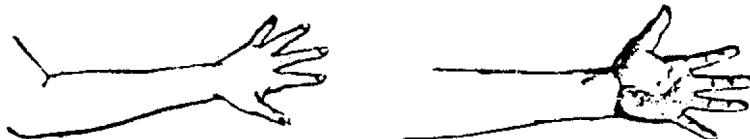
1. Wrist bends: Rest your forearm on the table or arm of the chair. Let your hand drop over the edge. Bend your wrist to bring the hand up as far as it will go. Then bend the wrist down.



2. Hand waves: Rest your hand and forearm on a table with your palm down. Slide your hand side to side as if you were waving. Keep your forearm still.



3. Palm up/down: Bend your elbow at your side, keeping your arm tucked close to your body. Turn your palm up toward the ceiling, then down toward the floor.



4. Finger tucks: Make a loose fist. Then straighten the big knuckles, keeping your fingers tucked in.



5. Finger slides: Touch your thumb to the tip of your index finger. Make an "o" shape. Slide your thumb along the finger to the palm. Repeat with each finger



6. Lean into hands: Stand with your hands resting flat on the table. Keep your arms straight. Lean forward onto the table, letting your weight rest on your hands.



What exercises should I avoid?

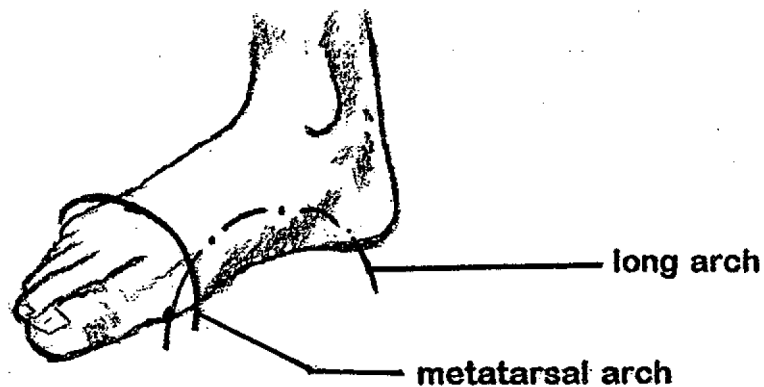
Do not squeeze a ball or grip it tightly. It puts stress on small joints and tendons in your hand. This can cause more pain and damage the joint.

✓ **Respect Pain**

Stop before you have pain. If you have pain after an activity, how long does it last for? If it lasts for more than an hour, you are working too long or hard. Use this chart to help you make changes to your activities.

What activities cause pain?	What can help?
1.	Who else can do this job? How can I make it easier?
2.	Who else can do this job? How can I make it easier?
3.	Who else can do this job? How can I make it easier?

How can I protect my feet?



✓ Wear the right shoes

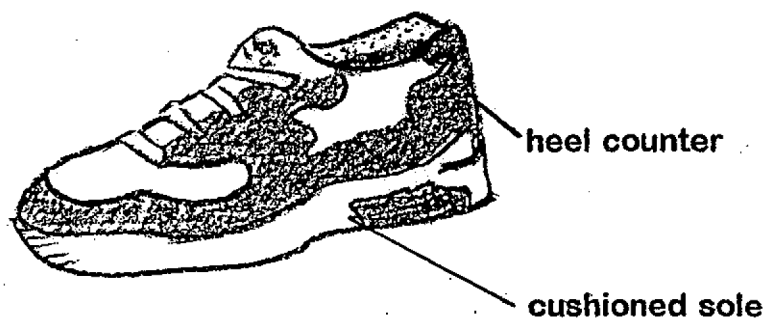
Wear shoes that support your feet. These shoes should be comfortable and keep your feet in their natural position.

Shoes should have:

- Cushioned soles as high as two finger widths (4 cm or 1 ½ inches)
- Firm support at the back of the heel
- Proper length and width (1 finger width longer than your longest toe)
- A round toe (not pointed)

Jogging Shoes

Jogging shoes are the best. They are better than tennis, cross-trainer, canvas or walking shoes. They have more support and extra cushion in the sole.



Sandals with straps that support your heel

Use these only for a short time (1 or 2 hours). You can use these on hot days, as a dress shoe or as a house slipper.

✓ **Get orthotics**

You can get orthotics made specially for your feet.

✓ **Exercise**

Exercise can:

- help your joints move better
- make your muscles stronger
- keep good arches in your feet

Check what you know

What is the best way to do these activities? Circle the answer that puts the lowest strain on your joints.

1. To take a hot dish out of the oven (using oven gloves) and serve it:
 - a. Grip the sides of the dish firmly between your fingers and thumbs. Then lift it out and carry it to the table.
 - b. Slide the dish out using the palms of your hands. Then lift it out to the top of the stove and serve it there.
 - c. Grip the sides of the dish firmly between your fingers and thumbs. Lift it out and put it on top of the stove. Then serve it there.

2. To clean the inside of windows:
 - a. Grip a sponge.
 - b. Use a cloth. Keep your hand flat as you wipe in circles.
 - c. Grip a cloth in fingers and thumb

3. To carry a basket of washed clothes:
 - a. Wrap your arms around the sides of the basket. Hold it close to your chest.
 - b. Grip the edges firmly with both hands.
 - c. Hold the basket on your hip. Use one arm to hold it and the palm of your other hand to keep it steady.

4. To write a long letter:
 - a. Hold the pen normally. Stop from time to time to stretch out your hand.
 - b. Hold the pen normally and write the letter without stopping.
 - c. Wrap some foam around the pen and stretch your fingers from time to time.

5. To vacuum downstairs:
 - a. Push the vacuum with one hand. Vacuum all the rooms in one day.
 - b. Grip the vacuum with two hands. Vacuum all the rooms in one day.
 - c. Vacuum one room each day. Push the vacuum with two hands.

6. To iron clothes:
 - a. Grip the iron and lift it from the iron rest to the board each time you use it.
 - b. Slide the iron from the iron rest to the board. Push the iron, keeping your fingers straight.
 - c. Lift the iron across but keep your fingers straight when you push it.

7. To plan jobs around the house:
 - a. Do some heavy tasks and then some lighter tasks
 - b. Do as much as possible
 - c. Give your hands a rest for a few minutes, every 10 to 15 minutes.

8. To bring the shopping home, or to bring it in from the car:
 - a. Use a trolley
 - b. Get it delivered, or ask a friend or the family to take it out of the car.
 - c. Carry the bags by yourself, one at a time.

9. To prepare potatoes for many people:
 - a. Use a regular peeler
 - b. Use a wide-grip peeler
 - c. Buy washed potatoes or cook them in their skins.
(You can take off the peel after if you wish).

10. To turn off the tap:
 - a. Use a tap turner
 - b. Press down on the top of the tap. Turn it using two hands.
 - c. Grip the tap firmly with your fingers. Tighten it.

11. To serve a hot meal from a pan:
 - a. Hold the pan in one hand, while you spoon out the food with the other hand.
 - b. Leave the pan on top of the stove. Spoon it out from there.
 - c. Grip the handle with both hands. Lift the pan to pour out the food.

12. To close a drawer:
 - a. Push it closed with your palm
 - b. Push it closed with your fingers
 - c. Push it closed with your hip or thigh

13. To bring a bag of groceries home:
 - a. Hold it close to your body, using both arms and hands.
 - b. Carry it with the handle at your elbow.
 - c. Grip it firmly with one hand.

14. To carry a tray:
 - a. Grip the tray firmly with both hands.
 - b. Grip the edge of the tray with one hand. Put your other arm under the tray to support the weight.
 - c. Slide the tray onto your palms and forearms to carry it.

15. To open a new jar:
 - a. Use the palm of your hand to press down and turn the lid.
 - b. Use a jar opener.
 - c. Grip the lid firmly with your fingers. Then twist it off.

16. To move a full pan across to the stove:
 - a. Slide the pan as much as you can.
 - b. Hold the pan in one hand. Then lift it.
 - c. Use two hands: one on the handle and one under the pan.

17. To read a book:
 - a. Rest the book on your palms.
 - b. Rest the book on a cushion on your lap.
 - c. Hold the edges of the book.

18. If your hands are often painful after doing jobs at home:
 - a. Stop. Look at how you do the tasks. Change the way you do them.
 - b. Carry on as usual and ignore the pain.
 - c. Stop the task and wait until the pain gets better. Then keep going.

19. When you invite family or friends for dinner:
 - a. Plan in advance. Prepare some things the day before.
 - b. Plan in advance. Prepare all the food on the same day.
 - c. Plan and prepare all the food on the same day.

20. When you feel your arthritis is worse:
 - a. Go to bed and get up at the normal time.
 - b. Go to bed for longer. Rest more during the day.
 - c. Go to bed for longer (resting for 8-9 hours).

Answers:

1. b	6. b	11. b	16. a
2. b	7. c	12. c	17. b
3. a	8. b	13. a	18. a
4. c	9. c	14. c	19. a
5. c	10. a	15. b	20. b

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