

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.

Contents

Joints and arthritis2

How do I protect my hands and wrists?.....3

How can I protect my feet?.....9

Check what you know.....11

Your Name: _____

Your Occupational Therapist: _____

↳ Phone: _____

Your Physical Therapist: _____

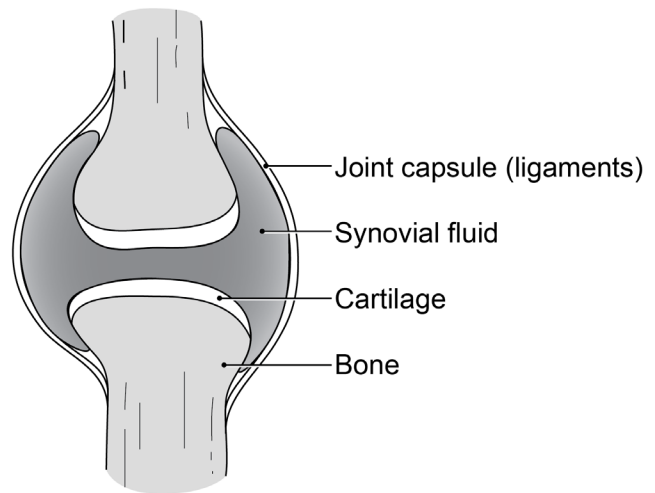
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Joints and arthritis

What does a normal joint look like?

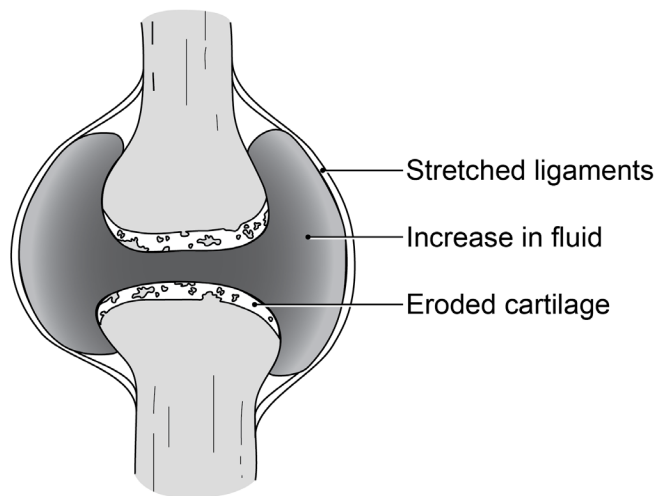
A joint is a joining of 2 bones. Muscles and ligaments hold the bones in place.



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.

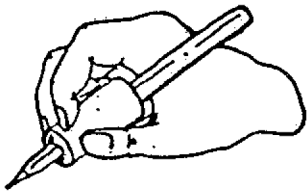
How do I protect my hands and wrists?

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.

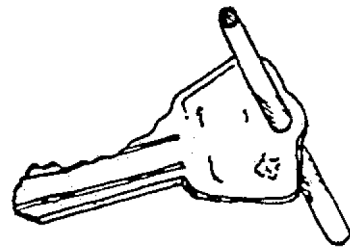
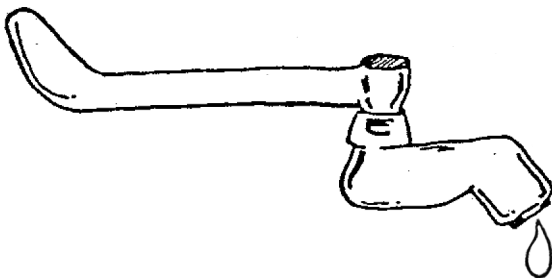
Try these tips. They can make activities easier, and protect your joints.

✓ Do not grip too tightly

- Use large handles

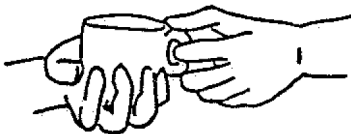


- Use levers to use less force



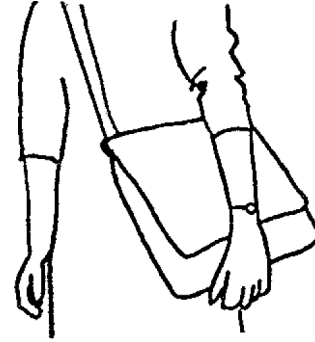
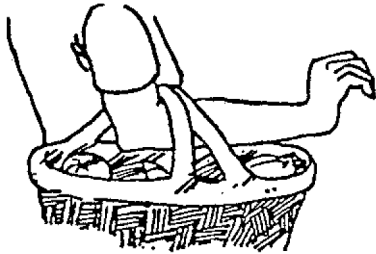
✓ Use two hands

- Use two hands to hold things



✓ **Use larger joints**

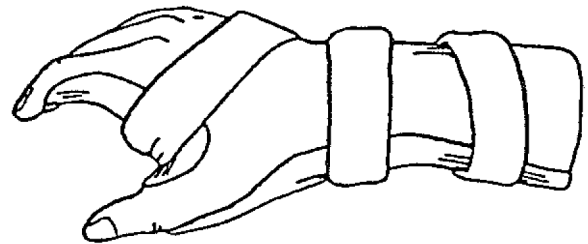
- Carry bags in your arms or over your shoulder (not in your hands)



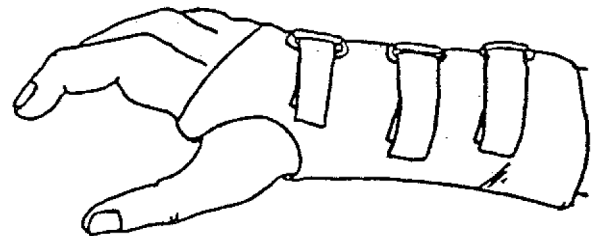
✓ **Use splints to support your hands and wrists**

- 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.

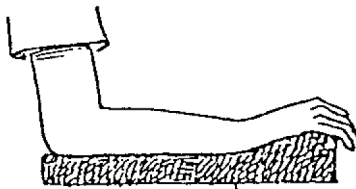


Working Splints: Wear these while you use your hands for activities. They support your wrist.



✓ **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

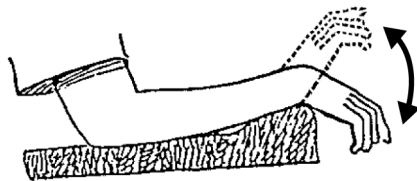
STOP before you have pain!

✓ **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.

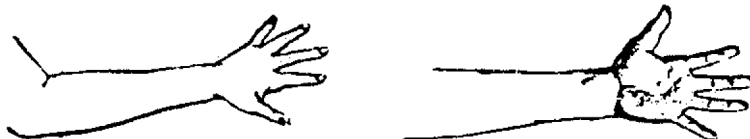
1. Wrist bends: Rest your forearm on the table or arm of the chair. Let your hand drop over the edge. Bend your wrist to bring the hand up as far as it will go. Then bend the wrist down.



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?

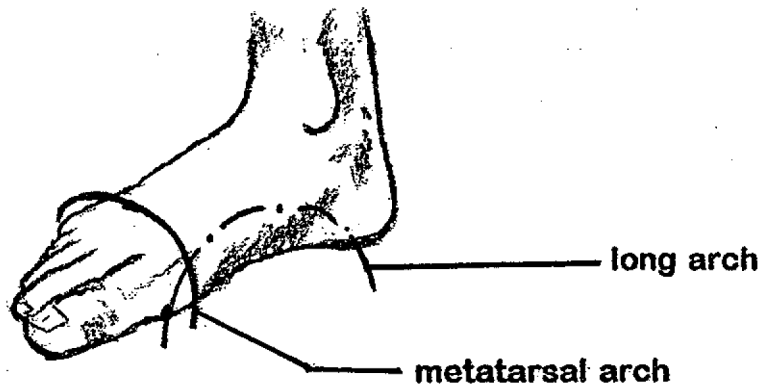
Do not squeeze a ball or grip it tightly. It puts stress on small joints and tendons in your hand. This can cause more pain and damage the joint.

✓ **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

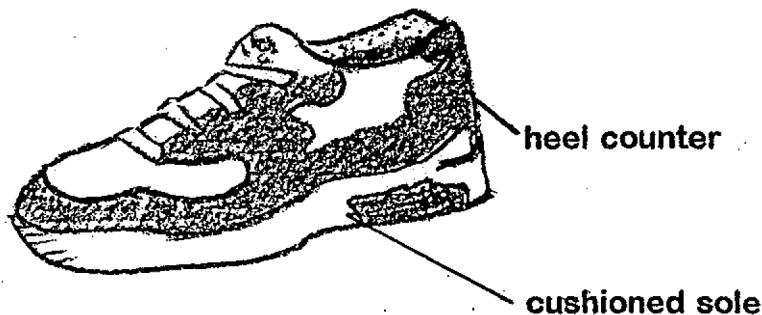
Wear shoes that support your feet. These shoes should be comfortable and keep your feet in their natural position.

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

Activity Tips

Try these activity tips that put less strain on your joints.

Reading and writing

- ✓ To write a long letter, wrap some foam around the pen and stretch your fingers from time to time.
- ✓ To read a book, rest the book on a cushion on your lap.

Preparing meals and cooking

- ✓ When you invite family or friends for dinner, plan in advance. Prepare some things the day before.
- ✓ To take a hot dish out of the oven (using oven gloves) and serve it, slide the dish out using the palms of your hands. Then lift it out to the top of the stove and serve it there.
- ✓ To prepare potatoes for many people, buy washed potatoes or cook them in their skins. (You can take off the peel after if you wish).
- ✓ To serve a hot meal from a pan, leave the pan on top of the stove. Spoon it out from there.
- ✓ To carry a tray slide the tray onto your palms and forearms to carry it.
- ✓ To open a new jar, grip the lid firmly with your fingers. Then twist it off. Also try jar openers.
- ✓ To move a full pan across to the stove, slide the pan as much as you can.
- ✓ To turn off the tap, use a tap turner.

Cleaning and tidying

- ✓ To clean the inside of windows, use a cloth. Keep your hand flat as you wipe in circles.
- ✓ To carry a basket of washed clothes, wrap your arms around the sides of the basket. Hold it close to your chest.
- ✓ To vacuum, vacuum one room each day. Push the vacuum with 2 hands.
- ✓ To iron clothes, slide the iron from the iron rest to the board. Push the iron, keeping your fingers straight.
- ✓ To close a drawer, push it closed with your hip or thigh.
- ✓ If your hands are often painful after doing jobs at home, stop. Look at how you do the tasks. Change the way you do them.
- ✓ To plan jobs around the house, give your hands a rest for a few minutes, every 10 to 15 minutes.
- ✓ When you feel your arthritis is worse, go to bed for longer. Rest more during the day.

Outside the home

- ✓ To bring the shopping home, or to bring it in from the car, get it delivered, or ask a friend or the family to take it out of the car.
- ✓ To bring a bag of groceries home, hold it close to your body, using both arms and hands.



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