

Joint Protection Principles

Therapist _____ Phone _____

Joint protection principles are a series of techniques which can be included into all activities. This will reduce the stress on your joints. Joints that have been weakened by arthritis are at risk of being damaged by stress and strain. Improper use of diseased joints may lead to impaired function and deformity. Joint protection techniques are ways of doing activities so that the risk of deformity is decreased.

1. Respect For Pain

- Stop activities before you reach the point of discomfort or pain.
- Limit activities which cause your pain to last more than one hour after you have stopped the activity.

2. Balance Activity And Rest

- Rest before becoming tired.
- Plan rest periods during longer or more difficult activities.
- By resting 10 minutes during an activity, you will have more energy to continue.

3. Avoid Activities Which Cannot Be Stopped

- When you begin to feel joint pain, stop. This will eliminate excessive pain and fatigue later.
- Prioritize activities. Consider the activity, length of time, and difficulty before beginning. Plan difficult activities for “peak” energy times.

4. Use Larger, Stronger Joints For Activities, When Possible, Distributing The Weight Over Non-involved Or Stronger Joints.

To lift a bag from a counter, bend your knees, hug the bag with both arms. Bend your elbows so that the bag is held tightly to your chest and straighten your knees. Keep hold on the bag by keeping your elbows bent. If the load is too heavy, push shopping cart, or get help with groceries - use drive-up service.

You can use your hip to push open doors, and your feet to close lower drawers.

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- An envelope briefcase with a snap lock can be used rather than an attache case. By bending the elbows, the case can be carried under the arm so that the case rests on the forearm. Hold the case by resting your arm against your body. Switch the case from one side of the body to the other.
- Use the larger joints (elbow or shoulder) to carry the weight of the purse.

Wrong: The weight of the purse is all on the weak fingers.

Right: The stronger elbow should carry the weight of the purse.

- Wing faucets: Keeping wrists extended, use the palm of your left hand to turn on a left faucet and the back of your left hand to turn the faucet off.

- Four-pronged or circular faucets: Place palm of hand on top of the faucet keeping fingers extended. Straighten your elbow and apply a downward force on faucet, pushing from your shoulder. Keeping fingers and elbow extended, turn your arm inward toward your thumb.

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Wrong: Do not use fingers to lift heavy roasting pans or dishes.

Right: Use oven mitts and lift with palms, using the stronger wrists and elbows to do the work.

Wrong: All the weight of the pot would be on your weak fingers.

Right: Pick up the pot with two hands, using your palms.

5. Avoid Staying In One Position For Extended Periods Of Time.

- Plan rest periods.
- Change your position.
- Stretch and relax your joints.

6. Maintain Or Use Your Joints In Good Alignment.

- Maintain proper posture.

This is good alignment.

Avoid or change activities that cause your fingers to move towards the little finger side of your hand.

OVER →

Use the palms of your hands for lifting and pushing. Push instead of pulling.

Dishwashing should be done with fingers kept straight as much as possible. If a dishwasher is available, use it in preference to washing by hand.

7. Maintain Proper Weight.

- Additional weight can stress weight-bearing joints (hip, knees, feet, back).

Special Considerations For The Hands

1. AVOID TIGHT GRASP.
 - Use a relaxed grip.
 - Enlarge handles.

Place palm of hand on jar lid, and using weight of body, turn arm at shoulder to open jar. A sponge or wet towel under the jar prevents sliding.

Hold the knife or mixing spoon like a dagger, with the handle parallel to knuckles. Cutting is then changed from sawing to pulling.

2. AVOID PRESSURE ON BACK OF KNUCKLES (MP JOINTS).

Wrong

Right

When rising from chair or bed.

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3. USE BOTH HANDS WHEN POSSIBLE

4. AVOID REPETITIVE HAND ACTIVITIES

- Take breaks
- Change activity, i.e. using screwdriver, crocheting.

5. AVOID PRESSURE TO TIP OF THUMB

- Example: pushing snaps together, opening car doors, ringing doorbells.

To protect thumb joints, open milk containers with heels of the hands rather than thumbs.

Ring top cans: Hold the can with one hand. With the other hand, place a knife through the ring with handle of knife directly over the opening. Using the palm of your hand, push down on the handle of the knife.

Posture

Whether walking, standing, sitting or even sleeping, good posture is important for people with arthritis. Poor posture can make arthritis worse. As for standing, you should stand straight, head high, shoulders back, stomach in, and hips and knees straight.

Walking

Walk erect, as in standing position. Arm swing freely at sides; let your weight shift easily from side to the other. Don't carry heavy packages in one hand. A lightweight shoulder bag is a good idea. If legs or knees are involved, a cane will make walking easier.

OVER →

Resting/Sleeping

Patients with rheumatoid arthritis should avoid bent knees or arms. Lie straight at sides, knees and hips straight. Use a firm mattress or put plywood board between mattress and bedspring. If you need a pillow under your head, use a thin one. Keep sheets and blankets loose over your feet, perhaps by using a blanket support. If your arthritis is in your back, you may need a different position for sleeping. Ask your doctor.

Sitting

Keep good posture when sitting down. Use straight-back armchairs with firm seats. Sit with head up, shoulders back, stomach in, feet flat on floor. Use arms of chair to stand up slowly.

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