

Joint Protection:

Managing Activities with Hand Arthritis



Inflammatory Arthritis
Rehabilitation

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What Is Joint Protection?

Protecting a joint means **changing the way you do activities to make them easier on your joints**. You do not have to avoid doing daily activities.

Why Should I Do This?

- Reduces the pain and stress to your joints
- Makes your daily activities easier

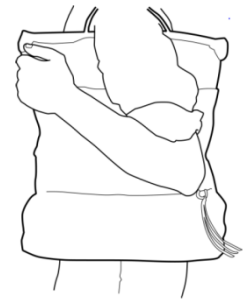
How to Protect Your Joints

These tips help lower the stress on a swollen, weak, or damaged joint. If you can, try to use these tips **all** the time:

1. Use Stronger, Larger Joints

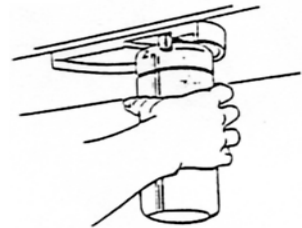
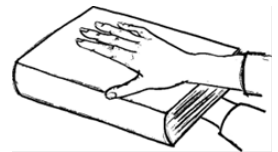
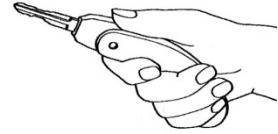
The joints in the hand are small, so they are less strong. Use larger joints instead of small joints when you can:

- Carry heavy items with two hands. Hug the item close to your body.
- Loop bags and shopping bags over your forearm or shoulder instead of your hands. If there are 2 straps wear like a backpack.
- Push or pull items instead of carrying. For example, use a cart or wheeled bag to carry heavy loads.
- Close doors/drawers with your hip/bottom.
- Push up from low seats with the palms of your hands or forearms.



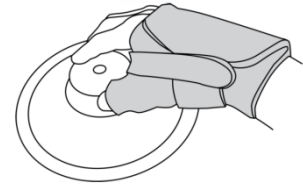
2. Change Your Grip

- Loosen your grip. Tight grip puts more stress on the joints.
- Use large or padded handles. You can increase the size of handles and small items like pens by wrapping foam, piping insulation, or a towel around the handles.
- Use 2 hands to carry heavy items and use a more open hand if possible.
- Non-slip surfaces will improve grip with less pressure. Use pen grips and non-skid rubber mats under objects.
- Avoid side pinch. For example, pushing against side of the pointer finger with thumb, or activities that push the fingers in the direction away from the thumb.
- Hold knives and stirring spoons in a fist to avoid stress to the sides of joints.



3. Use Splints

- Splints can improve your grip and function.
- Splints reduce pain and stress to the joints and hold them in a good position.
- You could benefit from a splint for doing activities or for resting.
- Splints can be made to fit you (custom made) or you can buy them in stores.
- Talk to your arthritis therapist about if a splint is right for you.


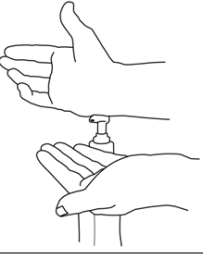

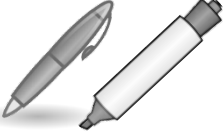


4. Plan and Pace Your Activities

- Change position often - staying in the same position such as holding a book can increase your joint stiffness.
- Take short and frequent rest breaks.
- Talk to your therapist about proper set up of your work station. Repetitive tasks and poor positions, for example, typing can increase your joint stiffness.
- Rest hands before they are tired or sore. Joint pain that is severe or that lasts more than 2 hours after the activity means that the activity was too stressful or done for too long.

5. Improve your tools

Good tools or equipment can reduce stress on your joints and make tasks easier.

Opening doors	Non slip material, lever door handles, key extensions.	
Dressing	Button hooks, zipper pulls, looser clothes with wide openings and easy fasteners.	
Hygiene /grooming	Look for pump style toothpastes, big handles, long handled brushes, hairdryer holders, large easy grip nail clippers, tap levers.	
Cooking	Use light weight pans, food processor, electric can opener, large grips on kitchen equipment.	
Opening jars	Try non slip mats or rubber gloves, jar seal opener, lever style or electric jar opener.	
Reading	Use a book holder/stand, or try audiobooks, e-books, podcasts.	
Writing	Look for larger pens or add a wider pen grip.	
Cutting	Sharpen scissors often, try easy grip or spring scissors.	
Driving	Wrap a thick/foam cover over the steering wheel. Use the lock lever on gas pumps.	

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This information does not replace the advice given to you by your health care provider.

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