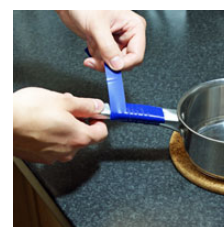


Joint protection for osteoarthritis

Introduction

Joint Protection can reduce stress on arthritic joints and decrease pain. There are several joint protection principles, which if followed, will help to conserve energy and preserve joint function. The advice is quite simple, but you must be mindful of proper movements and recognise body signals.



Respect pain

First and foremost, you need to recognise body signals. If you are experiencing pain after an activity, you must consider that you have been too active or done too much. Don't disregard the pain - respect the pain you are feeling. For arthritis patients there is a 2-hour rule, which states that if you have more arthritis pain two hours after you exercise than you did before, consider cutting back the next time. Basically, adjust your activity level to your pain level.

Avoid activities that hurt affected joints

Avoid any activity that causes pain and find a better way of accomplishing the task. Make compromises which will protect your joints. If standing causes pain, attempt to do the activity while sitting. Avoid excessive pressure on the small joints of the hand. For example, if opening a water bottle is painful, don't force your hand. Get a bottle opener that works or have someone else open it for you. Also, avoid heavy lifting. Ultimately, your common sense will dictate what is an activity which you should avoid.

Check out assistive devices which are available

There are assistive devices which will help you accomplish tasks that are otherwise difficult and painful. Jar openers, reachers, dressing sticks, long-handled cleaning tools, raised toilet seats, and shower benches are just a few examples of assistive devices which are easy to find. By using the assistive devices, you put less stress on your joints. Please ask your therapist.

Use largest & strongest joints / muscles

You should use both arms when lifting or carrying an object. By using the largest and strongest joints, you will not stress single joints or weaker areas of your body.

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Use Good Posture and Body Mechanics

There are proper ways to stand, sit, bend, reach, and lift (as shown by your therapist) that will allow you to put less stress on your joints. By moving properly, you can preserve your joints.

Avoid Staying in One Position for Too Long

Staying in the same position for a long time can cause joints to stiffen and become painful. You should change positions as often as possible so you can protect your joints.

Balance Activity and Rest

It is imperative to balance activity and rest. When your body signals that it has had enough, schedule a period of rest. By balancing activity and rest, you will be able to do more, though it might take longer, and you will be protecting your joints as well.

Avoid Prolonged Periods of Immobility

Prolonged inactivity and immobility will cause stiffness and increased pain. Gentle range-of-motion exercises should be performed daily. Each joint should be put through its full range of motion by bending, stretching, and extending the joint.

Reduce Excess Body Weight

Extra weight adds stress to weight bearing joints. By losing weight and then staying at your ideal body weight, you will be protecting your joints.

Simplify, Plan, and Organise

Try to use your muscles and joints more efficiently. By planning and organising your work or any activity, the simplicity will translate into energy conservation and less stress on your joints.

<p>If you feel you would benefit from more Joint protection information please discuss the possibility of an occupational therapy referral with your therapist.</p>



PATIENT INFORMATION LEAFLET

Further information

The day surgery unit can be contacted on 02476 966861 / 02476 966868 (University Hospital), or on 01788 663264 (Hospital of St. Cross). For further information please contact Hand Therapy:

- at University Hospital Coventry & Warwickshire on 02476 966016
- at Hospital of St. Cross, Rugby on 01788 663257
- our specialist hand surgery nurse / hand-coordinator on 02476 965072

The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format please contact 02476 966861 and we will do our best to meet your needs.

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