

Joint Protection Strategies

There are six basic principles to remember when protecting your joints. This handout will discuss each principle in detail.

1. Respect Pain
2. Use larger, stronger joints
3. Reduce effort and force
4. Find balance between rest and activity
5. Exercise in pain free range
6. Avoid troublesome positions during everyday activities

Respect Pain

- Identify tasks that cause your pain to increase and avoid those tasks or adapt them
- working through the pain during and activity can cause more pain the next day
- Pace yourself, spread out activities that require use of your painful joints throughout your day

Use Larger and Stronger Joints

- slide heavy objects along counters
- support and carry heavy objects with your palms and not your fists or fingers
- use two hands to carry any object as much as possible
- carry objects closer to your body to spread out force on joints
- Use a backpack Instead of a briefcase or purse
- hold cups, water bottles, and mugs with your whole hand, keeping your thumb close to your Index finger



Reduce Effort and Force

- try to use assistive devices as much as possible. Items such as electric jar and can openers, spring loaded scissors, widened handles on utensils and toothbrushes, larger pens, key wideners, food choppers, button hooks, shoe horns, magnetic buttoned clothing, and seat belt handles as well as many other devices can be found online for purchase and can make everyday tasks much easier on your joints.
- keep Items you use frequently near you
- take frequent breaks during activities
- ask for help wen you need It
- widening handles on objects like utensils, pens, and toothbrushes
- switch out door knobs for door handles



Balance Rest and Activity

- take frequent breaks during an activity
- avoid activities where you wont be able to take a break
- alternate between heavy and light activities
- plan your day ahead of time to make sure your heavier tasks are spread out

Exercise in a Pain Free Range

- warm up your hands before participating in exercise to reduce stiffness and decrease pain. It may also be beneficial to you to warm up our hands before starting your day to reduce the pain during your morning routine and activities.
- balance between exercise and rest
- be intentional with your exercise - for example, do not use a grip strengthener endlessly while watching TV. Instead, set a timer for 10 minutes and stop when It goes off. Quality over quantity is the key for hand exercises and limiting pain.

Avoid Troublesome Positions

- The main trouble some position is pinching objects with your thumb and index finger. DO NOT pinch with your thumb and index finger. This puts **12 pounds** of pressure on the main joint in your thumb, which is a lot for that small joint to handle! Instead, pinch with your thumb, index, AND middle fingers. This puts only **6 pounds** of pressure on that main joint in your thumb which is much more manageable for your thumb to handle.



- make sure that work surfaces are at the right height for you so that you do not have to bend over and stretch when you are working at them
- while participating in tasks such as pushing buttons or gripping objects, keep the joints in your fingers straight or bent, avoid hyper extension or the 'U' shape