

## Hand Care Tips

If you experience pain or discomfort in your hands with an activity, you may need to stop the activity or alter your way of performing the activity. Pain and discomfort is the only way your body has of letting you know that you are causing tissue damage. We don't realize how much we use our hands daily until they hurt or feel weak and the feeling won't go away; getting in the way of function.

### Here are a few tips to keep your hands healthy:

#### Give Your Hands a Break:

- ✓ Protect the small joints of your hands and avoid carrying several plastic grocery bags at once to save time.
- ✓ Use paper or cloth bags, carry them one at a time, and use your large muscles to hold the bag close to your body instead of using the handle.
- ✓ If writing is painful, try using a thick, rubber grip pen with a gel tip or roller ball and lighten your grip. Also, try holding your pen between Index and middle finger to avoid a tight thumb to index finger grip.
- ✓ Take a Break. Stretch and try to do an opposite movement every 15 minutes away from prolonged activities such as computer, needlework, sewing, knitting, painting, hammering, and filing. It only needs to be a 5 or 8 seconds of a stretch repeated 2 or 3 times to relieve stress to tissues.
- ✓ This one is key: Figure out which activities aggravate your symptoms & avoid or modify them. Be creative, you will be amazed at how effective you can be and reduce your pain.

#### Avoid strain to the joints of your hands by using the right tool.

- ✓ Use a letter opener to open the mail
- ✓ Use utility scissors to open bags, even "easy open" zip seal bags.
- ✓ Use pliers for tight pinch and a small hammer for pounding.
- ✓ Use a staple remover instead of your fingers and thumb.
- ✓ Upgrade your manual can opener – maybe go electric!
- ✓ Instead of holding open books or magazines with one hand - use a bookstand or holder to bring the book to eye level and a book clip or "chip" clip to avoid prolonged gripping.
- ✓ Avoid tight squeezing and twisting. Use your palm to press rags/sponges against the side of the sink to remove excess water.



**Still Experiencing Symptoms?** You may get ideas by searching "adaptive equipment" on the Internet or it might be time to consider other treatment options such as hand therapy. Certified Hand Therapists are either occupational or physical therapists with specialized training in the treatment of hand and upper extremity conditions. If you believe that your condition is more serious and you would benefit from hand therapy.

#### Love Your Hands

Your hands work hard for you so treat them with love. No matter what you're doing, take a second to think about your hands. Your hands will thank you for it.

**Contact us if you just need some advice, more tips, or you want to schedule an appointment...**