

Patient information factsheet

Joint protection techniques

Information for people with arthritis

Arthritis is a common condition that causes pain and inflammation in a joint. In the UK, millions of people have arthritis or other, similar conditions that affect the joints. If you have arthritis, it's important to look after your joints to avoid further damage.

This factsheet provides information about joint protection techniques you may find useful, such as how to reduce pressure on your joints, along with details of sources for further information. If you have any further questions or concerns, please speak to a member of our team.

What are joint protection techniques?

Joint protection techniques help to reduce the strain placed on arthritic joints when completing your usual activities of daily living. This can include how you wash, dress, cook, manage work and take part in your hobbies.

Joint protection does not mean that you have to stop using these joints but instead use them in a different way to normal to reduce pain and inflammation. This can be achieved in various ways including:

- reducing the effort required to complete a task through the use of adaptive aids, such as using a can opener or tap turner
- taking regular breaks
- pacing yourself by spreading activities across the day
- spreading any weight being carried over several joints
- recognising pain and thinking about how the task could be completed differently
- avoiding positions that put your joints into unusual positions, for example, over-twisting your fingers

Employing joint protection techniques can help you to maintain independence with everyday activities and prevent further damage to your joints. Your occupational therapist or physiotherapist will be able to explore these recommendations with you further and help you apply them to suit your own lifestyle and activities.

Further information about joint protection can also be found on the Versus Arthritis website: www.versusarthritis.org/about-arthritis/managing-symptoms/joint-care/

Equipment and adaptive aids

Your local authority may be able to provide you with or help you obtain adaptive aids to make your daily activities easier. For more information and to find contact details for your local authority visit:

www.nhs.uk/conditions/social-care-and-support-guide/care-services-equipment-and-care-homes/home-adaptations/

Southampton City Council
Telephone: **023 8083 3003**

Hampshire County Council
Telephone: **0300 555 138**

Self-purchasing equipment

If you are not eligible for support, or prefer to purchase your own products, you will be able to find many aids online, as well as in supermarkets and local hardware stores. Where possible, try out the equipment before buying it, to make sure that it works for you. Below are some useful websites which offer advice and sell equipment:

AskSARA

Provides helpful advice on gadgets and equipment. The website will ask you to select the topic you're interested in and answer a few questions before giving a personalised report full of useful advice and products that may help you.

<https://medequip.livingmadeeasy.org.uk/>

Active Hands

Active hands make gripping aids that gently, yet firmly hold your hand into a gripping shape enabling you to hold tightly onto objects such as hammers and gardening tools. They also sell other hand-based equipment.

www.activehands.com/

The Mobility Aids Centre

The Mobility Aids Centre have collated a large collection of aids for individuals who has been affected by Arthritis to help with completing activities of daily living:

www.themobilityaidscentre.co.uk/product-category/shop-by-condition/arthritis-aids/

Motability

The Motability Scheme can help with the purchase of a new vehicle with adaptations to help make driving easier and help maintain independence. Their website provides a tool to identify eligibility for the scheme and examples of what can be provided:

www.motability.co.uk/whats-available/adaptations

How to ask for further support

If you are living with rheumatoid arthritis and find you are struggling with daily activities, you can request support via your GP who may refer you for physiotherapy or occupational therapy, for example.

If your symptoms remain under control for more than 3 months, you can still request a tailored exercise programme be prescribed for you by a qualified healthcare professional. Your GP will be able to provide further information.

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Contact us

For any queries on the contents of this factsheet, feel free to contact us via email at:

therapyservicesoutpatientinfo@uhs.nhs.uk

Useful links

NHS UK

www.nhs.uk/conditions/arthritis/living-with/

National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE)

Rheumatoid arthritis in adults: management

www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng100/chapter/Recommendations

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