AT HOME WITH **ARTHRITIS**



Simple steps for managing in the home

Arthritis AUSTRALIA

How can this booklet help?

When you have arthritis and are experiencing pain, stiffness or swelling of your joints, everyday tasks around the home may be more difficult.

You might find some tasks cause pain or discomfort, and other activities become almost impossible or easily exhaust you. But don't throw in the towel just yet! There are many ways that you can protect your joints from pain and discomfort and also make jobs around the home easier to manage.

This booklet includes information on:

- Ways to reduce joint stress and pain
- How to incorporate these techniques into your daily life
- How to find a healthy balance between activity and rest
- Aids and equipment that can make your daily activities simpler and less tiring.

The information in this booklet has been reviewed by a panel of people with arthritis and medical experts to make sure it is current and relevant to your needs. So, if you're looking for ways to take the pain and discomfort out of managing at home, this is the booklet for you!

© **Copyright Arthritis Australia 2019.**
Reviewed July 2019

Proudly supported by an unrestricted educational grant from:

ucb

Original booklet funded by the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing, through the Better Arthritis and Osteoporosis Care initiative. A subsequent review, July 2017, was funded by Pfizer PFA Australia.

CONTENTS

PROTECTING YOUR JOINTS 6
Pace yourself 6
Balance work and rest 7
Respect pain 7
Work smarter, not harder 8
Use the strongest and largest muscles and joints for the job 8
Use joints in their most stable position 8
Change the way an activity is done 9
Avoid staying in one position for too long 10
Avoid positions that stress joints 10
Use good body mechanics and posture 10

PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE 12
Gardening 12
Housekeeping 13
Shopping 14
Driving and car access 14
Clothing and getting dressed 15
Bedroom 16
Laundry and bathroom 16
Lounge room 18
General household 19
Environmental controls 20
Home office 20
Kitchen and cooking 22

WANT TO KNOW MORE? 28

This booklet is based on the following publications:

Joint Protection brochure, Occupational Therapy Department, Institute of Rheumatology and Orthopaedics, Royal Prince Alfred Hospital, Camperdown, NSW

How to manage and food packaging guide for people with arthritis booklets, Arthritis Queensland

Medical and consumer consultants

(Reviewed in July 2019)

Lyn Crossley
Arthritis SA, Health Educator

Mrs Wendy Favorito
Arthritis Australia Consumer Director and Board member

Dr Scott Graf
Rheumatologist

Dr Tiffany Gill
President Arthritis SA, Physiotherapist and Researcher

Judith Lowe
Arthritis SA, Health Educator

Professor Susanna Proudman
Arthritis Australia Medical Director and Board member

Jo Rayner
Arthritis SA, Manager Education Research and Advocacy



The information in this booklet has been obtained from various sources and has been reviewed by Arthritis Australia. It is intended as an educational aid and should not be used in place of medical advice. It can be reproduced in its entirety but cannot be altered without permission from Arthritis Australia.

The National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) publication *How to present the evidence for consumers: preparation of consumer publications* (2000) was used as a guide in developing this booklet.



Protecting your joints

Joints affected by arthritis are sometimes weaker and less stable than non-arthritic joints.

This makes them more vulnerable to damage, particularly from twisting or repetitive movements. As soon as you find out you have arthritis, it is important to start looking after your joints. Small changes in the way you do things can greatly reduce the stress on your joints and help prevent problems becoming worse in the future or causing permanent damage.

Here are some ways you can look after your joints.



Pace yourself

If you carefully plan and organise your activities you can make the most of your energy. Pacing helps you to do what you want to do without increasing your pain or fatigue.

Here are some simple tips to help you pace your activities:

- Take short breaks often. For example, do the activity for a set time, then take a short break, then do a bit more. You might find that by taking short breaks you will still be able to finish the activity without causing stress to your joints and increasing your pain
- Break up tasks into smaller bits. For example, divide your shopping into smaller bags so it is easier to carry and causes less stress on your joints. Make use of online shopping and home delivery especially for heavy items like milk. Rather than trying to clean the entire house, just do one or two rooms each day or have a rest between rooms
- Try to plan activities across a day or week to build in rest and times that are less busy. Consider which tasks are a priority and what you can allocate to others or put off to another time
- Try to avoid scheduling tasks one after the other as this may result in you over-exerting a specific area of your body or exacerbating your fatigue e.g. alternate a sitting task, such as computer work, with a standing task, such as cooking.
- Try to prioritise jobs. Do the hardest tasks when you are feeling your best. Prioritising also means you have control over how much you do. If you are having a 'flare' of your arthritis, you can still try to do some of the tasks on your list but have more frequent, short rest breaks.
- On a good day, be careful not to do more than you planned as you may feel the effects the following days.

Balance work and rest

When doing tasks around the house, set a steady pace and take a break BEFORE you get tired and sore. Alternate periods of rest and activity during the day. As a rough guide, try to take a 10-15 minute rest every one and a half hours. You can also rest different joints and muscles throughout the day by regularly changing activities. For example, switch from an activity that requires standing, to one that allows you to sit so that you can rest your legs and back.

Remember, don't overdo things on 'good days' as it could result in pain and tiredness over the following days.

Respect pain

The way you use your joints can increase the pain you feel. Over time, the way you use your joints can also make your joints more deformed. This is why it is important to listen to your body and take notice of pain. Pain can serve as a warning. Pushing through pain can make it worse and can also increase stress, tiredness and joint damage.

It is important to:

- Understand your limits. Take note of activities which cause you pain or cause your joints to swell



- Work within your limits of pain. Instead of working through pain you should think about changing the way you do that activity to minimise pain and protect your joints from further damage. Stop activities before you become really tired or before they cause excessive pain. If you have extra or unusual pain for more than one to two hours after an activity, you've done too much. Next time, reduce the amount of time spent on that activity or do less
- If you experience pain, take a break and then gradually resume your activity at a slower pace.

Many people with arthritis have some amount of pain all the time. While pain messages should always be respected, a fear of pain can stop you from living an active life and can lead to further problems. Many people will give up on an activity if it hurts. However it is better to keep doing these activities a little at a time, with plenty of rests, rather than give up something which you enjoy. So keep moving within the sensible limits described above.

Work smarter, not harder

Look for ways that you can use tools or your environment to help you accomplish tasks.

For example:

- Slide objects along a bench rather than lifting them
- Take advantage of carts or trolleys when transporting large items
- Use reach-extending tools to get those out-of-the-way items
- Shop online using shopping services to research and compare products. Use home delivery or 'click and collect' service to limit lifting and carrying
- Swap heavier items you use often for lightweight or plastic versions.

Use the strongest and largest muscles and joints for the job

Use your strongest and largest joints and muscles to distribute weight and reduce joint stress and pain.



For example:

- Use your thigh muscles to squat instead of your back to lift an object. Be sure to only squat as far as your pain allows
- Use your forearms to carry bags or trays rather than your wrists or fingers
- Carry items with your palms flat
- Use two hands to pick up objects whenever you can.

Use joints in their most stable position

Muscles and tendons are at their strongest when the joints are in straight alignment. Try to avoid or change activities that put your affected joints into unstable or awkward positions.

For example:

- When holding objects, try to keep your wrists straight and your fingers in line with your knuckles and wrist. Check the way you hold the kettle or iron, or how you carry a shopping bag
- When working at a table or bench, sit or stand as close as you can, facing your work, and reduce stretching and bending. If the table or bench is too low and you find yourself bending over it, consider a raised or standing desk or sit on a chair or stool instead of standing
- When carrying or lifting objects hold them close to your body.

Change the way an activity is done

Simply changing the way you do an activity can save time, energy and unnecessary joint pain.

Consider the following when doing your daily activities:

- Can you do this task while sitting rather than standing? For example, sit at the table when chopping vegetables for dinner
- Carry and lift items using two hands instead of one wherever possible
- Give tasks to others or ask for their help when necessary
- Use equipment (for example, a trolley) to carry items instead of lifting or carrying them
- Use equipment to make the job easier. For example, use a jar opener to get lids off jars and use long handled garden shears to prune trees and bushes
- Replace items in the home that are hard to use with items that have been designed with your needs in mind, e.g. swap standard taps for lever taps, or replace a barrel shaped vacuum for an upright vacuum to minimise bending.

Avoid staying in one position for too long as this can lead to tired muscles and stiff joints. It is generally recommended to change positions or stretch every 20 minutes.

For example:

- Release your grip every 10 to 15 minutes while writing or doing activities involving gripping with your hands or fingers
- Get up out of your chair during television commercial breaks
- Get out of the car and stretch every hour during long car trips
- Take a break from the computer every 15 to 20 minutes.

Avoid positions that stress joints

Swelling caused by arthritis can stretch and weaken joints. This can put joints more at risk of damage. Try to avoid positions or grips that put extra stress and force on joints.

For example:

- Select a wider pen that is comfortable for your grip and reduces pressure on your small finger joints
- Use a wireless headset so that your neck and arm are in comfortable positions while talking on the phone
- Select an ergonomic keyboard and mouse suitable for your hand size. Position the keyboard and mouse in the most comfortable position for you
- Use one pillow to support your neck in a straight line with your body while sleeping/resting.



Use good body mechanics and posture

Aim to maintain good posture when sitting or standing.

For example:

- When standing, spread your weight evenly on both legs
- When sitting, use a chair with a firm or supportive back rest. Try to avoid soft, ‘saggy’ couches
- Use long-handled tools (for example, dustpans, brooms and mops) to avoid bending and stooping. Long-handled shoe horns, bath/shower sponges, toe wipers, and grabbers (to help you pick things off the floor without bending) may also be useful
- Plan your work space so items are at a convenient height and you don’t have to stoop or stretch as you work
- Organise your work space so the items you use most often are within easy reach.

Organise your work space so the items you use most often are within easy reach.

Putting it into practice

There are many products with useful features that can be purchased to help you protect your joints.

When shopping, look for:

- Larger/thicker handles – these provide an easier grip and reduce stress placed on the small joints of the fingers and hands
- Longer handles – these will extend your reach, reducing bending and stress to your back
- Lever handles – these reduce twisting forces that may damage small joints and cause pain
- Non-slip floor mats – these can help reduce the risk of falls
- Non-slip hand held mats – these can make it easier to grasp slippery items
- Items that are lightweight (travel irons, microwave cookware)
- Containers that have tabs to make them easier to open and close
- Avoid packaging that requires a high level of fine motor skills or strength to open
- Trolleys and small furniture on wheels (laundry trolleys, small tables, storage baskets)
- Go electric – take advantage of electrically-powered devices that will save you energy and reduce stress to your joints for example electronic toothbrush and food processors.

An occupational therapist, physiotherapist or the Independent Living Centre can provide advice about managing daily activities when you have arthritis, including how to find these types of products when shopping. See the 'Want to know more' section of this booklet on page 28 for further details.

Gardening

Use long-handled tools to remove the need for bending

- Wrap foam or twist rubber bands around handles for a softer, more flexible and larger surface grip
- Mount a mailbox on your garden fence and store your tools in it



- When watering, use smaller containers with handles to reduce the weight you have to carry
- Use a pair of gloves designed to increase your grip and minimise the pressure on painful finger joints
- Avoid staying in the same position for a long period of time. Don't give your joints the chance to become stiff. Release your grip every 10 to 15 minutes. Use a small plastic bucket for weeds or clippings. As it fills faster it will encourage you to stop, change position or rest more frequently.

Housekeeping

- Do not rush! Pace yourself and take regular rest breaks
- Have a plan of attack. Spring clean one room per week and then do simple maintenance, such as tidying, at other times
- Use a trolley, plastic bucket or basket to transport the cleaning supplies
- If you have a two storey home, have cleaning supplies on both floors to avoid carrying the products up and down stairs
- Ask family or friends to help, hire a cleaner or check your local council for services in your area
- Wearing gloves can give you a better grip – particularly when scrubbing or cleaning
- Make use of long-handled dusters and cleaners, e.g. cobweb brooms, a squeegee on shower screens
- Use wet wipes or baby wipes for dusting



- Lightweight sweepers and mops (many with inbuilt detergent sprays) can be used in place of heavy mops, buckets or vacuums.

Shopping

- Use a trolley when shopping so you don't have to hold and carry heavy bags. Lifting heavy items can place pressure on joints
- Limit the number of items in each bag so that they are not too heavy. Ask the checkout operator to pack your groceries evenly into a number of bags rather than just one or two heavy ones
- Use shopping bags with comfortable handles or straps
- Look for shops that have change rooms with comfortable chairs so that you can sit to try on clothing
- Include a stop for a drink or meal during longer shopping trips so you have a chance to rest
- Limit the time you spend at the shops. Compare products online, phone and check your local store has items available before you visit
- Consider doing your shopping online and have it delivered to your door or to a convenient parcel pick up.

Driving and car access

- If getting in and out of the car is a problem there are many transfer aids that could be of assistance.

These include:

- handy bars
- car seat slide pads
- turn table seat pads
- roller sheets
- grip handle straps.

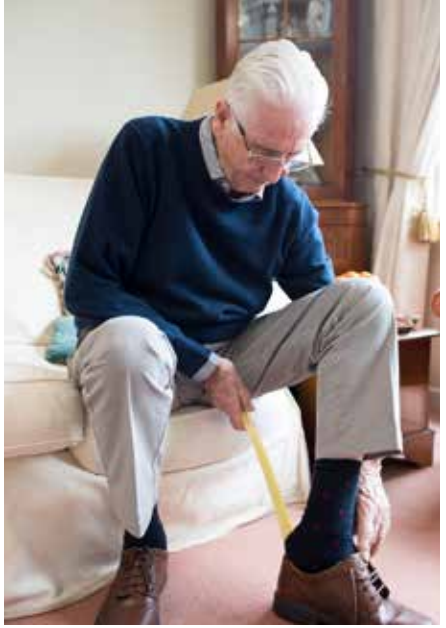
- To close doors, use a belt looped through the door handle on the inside of the car. Put your arm through the loop and swing the door closed
- Extra-wide rear view mirrors and blind-spot mirrors can assist if you have difficulty turning to check mirrors when driving
- Steering wheel covers can help reduce the force you require to hold the steering wheel. A variety of options are available including gel.

Items such as reversing cameras can be useful if you have difficulty turning your neck. These can be fitted to many cars. Contact the ILC or local motoring association for for more information.

Clothing and getting dressed

Socks and shoes

- Stocking, sock and pantyhose aids may be helpful if you have difficulty bending down to reach your feet. Special aids to assist in putting on compression stockings are also available
- Shoe horns (especially long handled) are very helpful for putting on shoes
- Elastic shoelaces can be used instead of standard shoelaces
- Look for shoes that can be easily adjusted at different points around your feet, eg. adjustable straps at the ankle, middle and front of the foot



- If your feet swell during the day, you may need to wear different shoes at different times of the day.

Buttons/zips

- Button hooks can make doing up buttons easier. They are used by passing the aid through the buttonhole to catch the button and then pulling the button back through the hole
- Undo only the first 2 or 3 buttons of a shirt and try putting it on and off the same way you do a t-shirt
- Sometimes the end of a button aid has a hook for looping through zips to assist in fastening them. You could also loop a ribbon or elastic through the zip hole.

Putting it into practice

Bras

- Front-fastening bras are a lot easier to use than back-fastening bras. Velcro-fastening bras are also available
- You may find it easier to use a t-shirt style bra or slip with inbuilt shelf bra with no fastening that pulls on over your head
- Try a different style. Some people find that swapping to a sports bra, racer-back, or under wire styles may be easier to manage and more supportive
- Most people do not wear the correct size bra. Being fitted by a specialist gives you the opportunity to try different styles and may provide better support which can reduce pain in the upper back, neck and shoulders.

Bedroom

Lighting

- Use a night light or bedside lamp for good visibility to prevent tripping. Sensor lights which will activate only when you get up are also available.

Making the bed

- Lifting a mattress can be difficult. Ask a family member for assistance or use a lightweight mattress. When purchasing a mattress consider if a 'no turn' mattress meets your needs
- Flat sheets can be easier to handle than fitted sheets
- Unfold your sheets and bedding on the bed so you don't have to hold, shake or lift large volumes of material
- Don't worry about hospital corners. Use a long-handled wooden spoon to help tuck the sheet under the mattress. Don't worry about tucking the top sheet at all
- Quilts can be lighter to lift and move than blankets.

Getting in and out of bed

- Adjustable beds come with features such as raising and lowering the height and raising and lowering the backrest for ease of getting in and out of bed and sitting up
- Bed sticks and rope ladders provide an anchor point for you to grasp to assist with moving in bed
- Getting out of bed can be made easier by rolling onto your side. Then slide your legs out of bed and slowly push up into a sitting position so you are sitting on the edge of the bed. Wait a few minutes before standing up



- Select a bed that is an appropriate height for you. Beds that are too high or too low can be difficult to get in and out of easily
- Consider removing rugs that might be a trip hazzard.

Laundry and bathroom

Ironing and washing

- Purchase permanent press clothes which do not require any ironing
- Use a lightweight iron, or steam iron
- Consider whether a steam press or garment steamer would work better for you
- Use a portable clothes airer rather than pegging clothes on the line
- Store powders, liquids and other containers at a level which avoids the need to bend or reach up high for them
- Avoid double handling of laundry, hang clothes on hangers where possible
- Consider using front loading appliances on pedestals rather than top loading appliances
- Use a laundry trolley instead of carrying a basket
- Tongs or a long handled reaching device can be used to remove clothes from the washing machine or dryer. This prevents leaning down into the machine
- If using standard pegs is difficult, consider using pegs which do not require a pinching or squeezing action. There are a number of different varieties available which work on a push or clipping action or have larger handles.

Showering hints

- A shower stool, which allows you to sit while showering, can give you more energy for washing and drying yourself
- A hand shower can help position the water without having to assume uncomfortable postures

- When taking a shower, put the soap in a cloth bag or a stocking and hang it around the taps. Wash yourself with the soap or consider using liquid soap (still in the bag/ stocking). This will prevent having to bend down to pick up the soap if you drop it
- Consider installing grab rails in your shower or beside the toilet to make it easier to get in and out. An occupational therapist can provide advice and recommendations for bathroom modifications



- Use non-slip mats, tread or strips on the floor in any wet areas, particularly the shower or bath
- Drying yourself can be difficult if your shoulders and elbows are painful and stiff. Using a towelling dressing gown immediately after your shower will save a lot of effort with drying
- Long-handled sponges and toe wipers assist with washing and drying
- Strategically placed hooks, small shelves and hanging racks allow you to store shampoo and other items within easy reach.

Lounge room

Chair selection

- If a chair is too low, it can be difficult to get in and out. Chair raisers can be placed under the legs of a chair to make the chair higher and easier to use
- If getting in and out is particularly difficult, electric lift chair recliners are available. These can electronically assist you to move from a sitting position to standing (via a remote controlled by you)
- Chairs with two armrests are usually easier to use to help you stand



- Avoid chairs with excessive cushioning. After sinking down into the chair it can be difficult to get back up again
- It is important that the chair you choose is comfortable, supportive and beneficial in maintaining a good posture. For the best support you may find swapping chairs during the day for different activities is helpful. For example lounge chair to watch TV, dining chair for eating meals, reading the paper, and using the ipad
- If you find getting up difficult because the seat is too soft or sinking, try placing thick cardboard under the seat to make the base firmer. If you usually sit in the same spot on the lounge, swap your seat cushion for one from a less used place on the lounge as it may be firmer. Alternatively, buy a new firmer cushion to fit your lounge
- Pay attention to the way you get up from sitting in a chair.

  A physiotherapist or occupational therapist can show you the safest method for you.

Lounge room setup

- Ensure you have a phone close by to avoid rushing to answer it and possibly tripping. Cordless phones are good for this purpose. Some emergency call systems let you answer your home phone without leaving your chair
- Use a pouch that hangs over the chair armrest to hold items such as the cordless telephone, or keep the phone within easy reach on a coffee table
- Try to keep the room clutter free and remove any unnecessary rugs or mats.

General household

Slippery surfaces

- Non-slip socks (standard socks with a non-slip grip on the bottom) can prevent slipping on tiled or wooden floors. These are available from supermarkets and department stores
- Remove loose floor rugs or use non-slip rug grips or underlay under rugs that tend to move
- Try to keep floors dry and mop up any spills or wet puddles as soon as possible
- Non-slip floorings in areas such as bathrooms, kitchens and laundries are important. Non-slip products (for example, self-adhesive non-slip strips, etching and other floor treatments) can make these areas less slippery.

Tap turners

- A tap turner is a portable lever device that can assist with the turning action required to operate a tap. It reduces strain on the fingers and wrist
- Alternatively, lever taps could be installed.

Environmental Controls

- Many devices allow you to control your home environment remotely, for example, remote controls for garage doors, sensor lights or keypad-operated door locks.

  Most of these types of controls can be installed to existing structures in the home
- A number of products and applications (apps) exist that allow you to use your mobile phone or voice activation to control your home environment, e.g. turn lights and heating on/off.

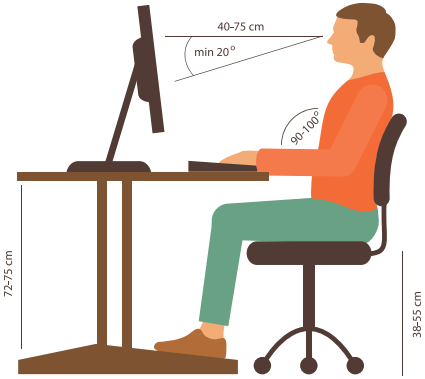


Home office/study

- Ensure your computer screen and keyboard are set up on a desk of an appropriate height with a comfortable, supportive chair.

  If possible, ask an occupational therapist or physiotherapist for advice on how best to set up your work space
- Select a cursor control device that doesn't require you to move excessively or assume an uncomfortable posture.

  An upright mouse or trackball may be a good alternative to a standard computer mouse
- Computer accessories such as voice-recognition software (which eliminates the need to type) can make accessing a computer easier
- Store regularly accessed files and paperwork on shelves and in drawers that don't require you to bend down or reach up



- If you use a laptop, tablet or mobile phone for work or leisure, don't forget to consider your body position when using the device. Try not to sit on the lounge or in bed for long periods when using your devices as this can encourage poor sitting posture.

  Sit in a supportive chair at a desk or table and take frequent breaks. Use an alarm or timer to remind you to move
- Stable tables and stands can help with positioning
- A stylus, external keyboard or a mouse may be easier to use placing less stress on your hands than built-in keyboards and other features.

Kitchen and cooking

Ideas for setting up your kitchen

- Organise your storage system and keep items where they can be easily reached, preferably at waist level. De-clutter your kitchen. Consider which and how many cups, plates, saucepans etc. you use regularly. Make sure these items are easily accessible, put everything else away
- Group particular items (for example, breakfast requirements) on a tray to minimise trips to the pantry. Keep items close to where you use them so that they are always easily accessible
- Use drawers, slide-out shelves and 'Lazy Susans' to improve access to storage
- Hang utensils for easier access
- Use a trolley to carry several items from the refrigerator or pantry to the work area
- Sit on a high stool while cooking or washing dishes
- Keep the rubbish bin in a handy position. Consider using a smaller-sized bin to avoid carrying large and heavy bags of rubbish when the bin becomes full
- Consider installing lever taps or quarter-turn taps.

Simplifying your work

- Knives: special ergonomic knives make cutting and slicing easier. Serrated blades require less pressure than straight-edged knives. Keep knives sharp and ready to use
- Breadboards: many designs of chopping boards are available. Some have guards to stop bread from sliding, or spikes to put vegetables on for one-handed slicing or folding ends for sliding items into pans. An extra thick board can help raise items to a more comfortable work height if your kitchen benches are low. Purchase plastic chopping boards as they are lighter than wooden boards
- Pot and pan holders: these devices can be attached to your stove to allow one-handed stirring
- Non-slip mats: use these to hold your plates and cutlery in place
- Jar openers: many different types of jar, bottle and tube openers are now available. Before you purchase make sure they work for you
- Electric plug puller: this device fits around an electrical plug and makes it easier to remove it from the power point



- Adapted cutlery and crockery: these are specially designed for easy gripping
- Buy saucepans and pots with two handles for easier lifting
- Look for lightweight crockery and kitchen items
- Opt for utensils with a large, comfortable grip
- Disposable pans, non-stick sprays and aluminium foil and baking paper make cleaning up a breeze
- Check out electrical items that may be easier to use such as hand-held mixers, electric knives, juicers, blenders, and food processors. Before purchase make sure you can easily dismantle for cleaning and press the switches
- Hold stirring spoons like a dagger to prevent joint stress
- Use plastic bags instead of plastic film wrap
- Choose a kettle with the handle across the top, and don't overfill
- Choose plastic measuring jugs, spoons and other items. Plastic microwave cookware is available for a wide variety of foods. Look for styles with handles, large clips and steam vents
- Look for a grater that has a non-slip base and a handle on the top
- A sponge is easier to squeeze out than a cloth
- Wipe down benches with your hand flat, not scrunched
- Use a dish drainer instead of drying with a tea towel.

Food packaging

Look for arthritis-friendly food packaging that makes it easier on your joints when preparing meals. Wherever possible, try to avoid products that require the use of tools like scissors or sharp knives to open packaging, such as required with plastic clamshell packaging. Also avoid packaging that requires a high level of fine motor skills or

strength to open. Some packaging caps have more than one seal that may be hidden, such as small tabs on induction seals.

Here are some ways to manage packaging if your hands and fingers are affected by arthritis:

- Canned food: look for a can opener with a large turner and locking handles, or preferably an electric can opener
- Plastic bags: look for food that is packaged in a resealable bag, or has a large opening notch to facilitate easy tearing. For all food that is packaged in non-resealable plastic bags, simply cut the plastic bag with kitchen shears and seal with a peg or food clip. Alternatively, transfer the contents to an airtight container



- Cardboard boxes: slip a blunt knife under the flap of the box, and run it along the edge
- Bread: use a food clip or peg to seal your bread bag rather than using a twister tie
- Containers with foil/plastic coverings: look for packaging with large overhanging textured pull tabs or packaging that can be easily punctured without having to use a tool. When the seal is not easy to open, use a sharp knife to cut a cross in the covering, and peel back each section
- Milk cartons: use a carton pourer and sealer, or opt for plastic, one-litre milk bottles which are lighter and easily opened with a jar opener
- Jars: use a specially designed device to open and close jar lids easily. Where possible, choose plastic over glass
- Vacuum-sealed jars: a jar opener releases the vacuum seal and lifts the lid slightly to break the seal. Some new jar lid designs can allow the seal to be broken more easily
- Flip-top lids: look for a flip-top lid with a large lip that is easy to open. A multi opener will assist with opening flip-top lids on sauce bottles, medication bottles, or other bottles with this type of lid that are more difficult to open



- Bottles: a bottle cap opener will help not only with ordinary bottles, but also bottles with safety caps (found on some medication bottles)
- Water bottles: single use light-weight plastic water bottles with twist-off caps can be tricky to open, look for a design that provides grip or ask for assistance opening the bottle from the cashier. Alternatively carry a refillable water bottle you find easy to open instead
- Tetra packs: look for tetra packs with flip top lids. Simply break the seal with a skewer and seal with the flip top lid. If you can't find a flip top lid, use kitchen shears to cut the tetra pack – never use a knife
- Continuous plastic seals on bottles/jars: no special devices are currently available for this type of seal. Ask family or friends to break the seal for you
- Plastic bottle caps with perforated plastic seals (such as those on plastic milk bottles): run a pair of sharp kitchen scissors around the lid to break the seal. Standard jar openers will also work on the larger jars (for example, peanut butter jars) with this seal. It is important to position the gadget above the seal.

Food preparation tips

- Store dry goods in plastic containers that are easy to open
- When tired, consider using products such as frozen microwaveable vegetables, fish that can be steamed in a bag, rice pouches or frozen meals
- Cook double quantities and freeze half for later
- Maximise your microwave. Cook vegetables, rice and pasta in the microwave. Cook sauces in

a serving jug, instead of using a saucepan from which you have to pour the sauce

- Reduce preparation where you can. For example, using frozen vegetables instead of fresh, or sauce and cake mixes rather than cooking from scratch.

Meat, fish, poultry

- Buy meat that's already diced or cut into serving sizes. Ask your butcher to cut your meat into pieces or portions and de-bone roasts
- Purchase cold meats from the deli to avoid dealing with difficult packaging

Dairy products

- Opt for grated cheese, cheese slices or cubes over cheese blocks. Look for easy-peel, re-sealable packages
- Many yoghurt and dairy desserts are packaged with foil lids. To open, cut a cross in the foil and peel back each section from the centre
- Choose one-litre milk bottles, or tetra pack long-life milk with flip top lids, over milk in a carton
- If purchasing a carton, use a pourer and sealer for easy access.

Fruit

- Diced fruit is available in packaging with 'easy peel' lids. Cut a cross in the foil and peel back
- Tinned fruit can be purchased in large, twist-top containers that are easily stored in the fridge. Keep the lid slightly ajar to enable easier opening
- When slicing round fruit (for example, apples) cut them in half and place the flat surface on the chopping board to make slicing easier.

Vegetables

- 'Heat and serve' containers and 'microwave-ready' vegetables are available in many supermarkets
- Many greengrocers and supermarkets sell vegetables that are re-packed and pre-sliced
- To ease the stress of food preparation, use a variety of frozen or canned vegetables or pre-packaged salads
- Choose vegetables that do not need peeling (for example, broccoli and zucchini) and cook vegetables whole
- Use a steamer or bamboo steaming basket to cook vegetables
- Microwave steam bags are available for steaming fresh or frozen vegetables
- Remove vegetables from a saucepan with a slotted spoon to avoid lifting a heavy saucepan of hot water
- Use a potato peeler with a large grip.

Other

- Buy sliced bread and use a peg to seal your bread after opening
- Swap to lightweight utensils, crockery and cookware where you can
- Purchase rice in re-sealable plastic packages, or twist-top containers
- Purchase a colander with feet and handles that can stand in the sink. Put your colander in the sink and rest the full saucepan on the draining board and tip into colander.

Flip-top lids: look for a flip-top lid with a large lip that is easy to open.



Want to know more?

Your State/Territory Arthritis Office can provide you with details of support services for people with arthritis and other information resources that may be useful.

Freecall anywhere in Australia: 1800 011 041 or visit www.arthritisaustralia.com.au

An occupational therapist (OT) is a health professional who can advise you on how to take stress and strain off joints affected by arthritis. They look at your activities at home or work, then show you ways to simplify daily tasks and protect your joints. OTs can also advise you on any special equipment you might need, including splints and devices to make everyday tasks easier on your joints, such as those mentioned in this booklet.

A physiotherapist (physio) can advise you on exercise, posture, walking aids and other ways to look after your joints and muscles.

Your GP or specialist can provide a referral to an OT or physio, or you can contact a private therapist directly at any time.

Find a private OT by contacting Occupational Therapy Australia at www.otaus.com.au or 1300 682 878

To find a private physio contact the Australian Physiotherapy Association at www.australian.physio or 1300 306 622.

If you have private health insurance, your health fund may cover part of the cost of seeing an OT or physio.

If your GP refers you to an OT or physio as part of a care plan, you may be able to have five sessions per year funded by Medicare. Ask your GP for more information.

OTs and physios are also available in the public system, such as at a community health centre or public hospital. There is often a waiting list and you will usually need a referral from your GP. These services are usually free or low cost.

Having arthritis can affect you emotionally, as well as physically. Many people with arthritis are frightened and/or frustrated by the impact arthritis might have on their everyday life and their future. It is common to feel frustrated or depressed if you are finding it difficult to keep doing your normal home, work or social activities. For more information about how to manage these feelings, see *Arthritis Australia's Arthritis and emotional wellbeing* information sheet.

You can find information about all types of equipment discussed in this booklet at an Independent Living Centre. These centres are located in each capital city and have displays of aids and devices that make daily tasks around the house easier. You can get advice, including where to purchase equipment, in person or over the phone. Occupational therapists are also available at the centres to provide advice about the equipment. You may need to make an appointment, and may be charged a fee, to see an occupational therapist.

See Independent Living Centre www.ilcaustralia.org or call 1300 885 886 to find your closest centre.

If you're in the ACT call (02) 6205 1900 or in Tasmania call (03) 6334 5899.

Note, the Independent Living Centre is called LifeTec in Queensland.

Online information:

For access to quality online information about arthritis, start at the Australian Government's HealthInsite website, www.healthinsite.gov.au

Healthy eating

For advice on healthy eating and exercise, visit the Australian Government's A Healthy and Active Australia website, www.healthyactive.gov.au

For expert nutrition and dietary advice on how you can best meet your nutritional needs, contact an Accredited Practising Dietitian, see www.daa.asn.au

Notes

My contact details

My name:

Telephone:

My GP:

Name:

Telephone:

My specialist:

Name:

Telephone:

My support team:

Name:

Telephone:

Name:

Telephone:

My medicines

Name	Dosage	Instructions

ARTHRITIS AUSTRALIA

Arthritis Australia is a not-for-profit organisation that provides support and information for all Australians affected by arthritis.

Contact your State/Territory Arthritis Office to find out about the range of awareness and education programs, support services and resources available.



ARTHRITIS ACT
Building 18, 170 Haydon Drive
Bruce ACT 2617
PO Box 908 Belconnen ACT 2616

ARTHRITIS NEW SOUTH WALES
Suite 1, 15/32 Delhi Road
North Ryde NSW 2113
Locked Bag 2216 North Ryde NSW 1670

ARTHRITIS NORTHERN TERRITORY
Shop 18, Rapid Creek Business Village
48 Trower Road, Millner NT 0810
PO Box 452 Nightcliff NT 0814

ARTHRITIS QUEENSLAND
WOTSO Chermside, Level 2 Westfield
Chermside, Chermside QLD 4032
PO Box 2121 Lutwyche QLD 4030

ARTHRITIS SOUTH AUSTRALIA
111A Welland Avenue
Welland SA 5007

ARTHRITIS TASMANIA
19A Main Road, Moonah TAS 7009
PO Box 780 Moonah TAS 7009

ARTHRITIS WESTERN AUSTRALIA 17 Lemnos Street
Shenton Park WA 6008
PO Box 34 Wembley WA 6913

ARTHRITIS AUSTRALIA

Level 2, 255 Broadway
Glebe NSW 2037
PO Box 550 Broadway NSW 2007
Phone: 02 9518 4441
Email: info@arthritisaustralia.com.au

ISBN: 978-0-9805024-4-2

Arthritis Infoline: 1800 011 041 www.arthritisaustralia.com.au