



HAND CARE TIPS

Your hands are constantly on the go. Every day activities, such as preparing a meal, woodworking, carrying grocery bags, or using your computer, can damage your hands over time. Joint protection techniques can help reduce pain, stress, and inflammation of your joints. These techniques can also help prevent further deformities and increase your independence in daily activities. There are many easy and inexpensive ways to protect your hands. Here are a few tips to keep your hands healthy:

Give Your Hands a Break:

- If you have pain during an activity, stop the activity. Pain is one of the best ways your body has of letting you know that you are causing tissue damage. So listen to and respect your pain.
- Protect the small joints of your hands and avoid carrying several plastic grocery bags at once to save time. Use paper bags, carry them one at a time, and hold them at the bottom instead of using the handles.
- If writing is painful, try using a thick, rubber grip pen with a gel tip or roller ball to decrease the amount of pressure used.
- Remember to stretch and take rest breaks every 15 minutes during repetitive or prolonged activities such as needlework, painting, sewing, knitting, hammering, and filing.
- Figure out which activities aggravate your symptoms & avoid or modify them; don't be afraid to ask others for help.
- Use pump shampoos and toothpaste-use the palm of your hand to pump instead of squeezing the container.

Don't Use your Hand as a Tool!

- Don't tear your mail open - use a letter opener to open the mail.
- Use utility scissors in the kitchen - do not rip open bags.
- Always use the right tool for the job - use pliers for tight pinch and a small hammer for pounding.
- Use a staple remover instead of your fingers and thumb.
- Get rid of your manual can opener - go electric! Manual can openers place excessive strain on your joints.
- 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.

Use Adaptive Equipment to Decrease Stress on your Joints:

- Use devices to hold objects so that you don't have to, i.e. a vice, a cutting board with picks to hold food, etc.
- Use foam to enlarge small diameter objects such as paring knives, cutlery, toothbrushes, paintbrushes, pens and pencils.
- Purchase lightweight kitchen, gardening, and workshop tools with built-up handles.
- Use a non-slip jar opener – opening jars places undue stress on your joints.
- If you have pain when using keys to open doors, consider adding a key extender to your keys.
- If you have difficulty opening doorknobs or faucets, purchase doorknob or water faucet handle extenders.
- Consider a card holder if you play cards for extended periods of time.
- Perform a search on the Internet for “adaptive equipment” to see what products are available.

Still Experiencing Symptoms?