

# Joint Protection

## What is joint protection?

Joint protection means caring for your joints by reducing excess stress that can structurally change or damage your joints. It might involve using adaptive equipment, changing the environment or modifying activities.

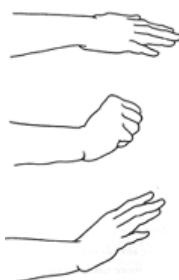
## Why is joint protection important?

Joint protection is important to ensure that joints are not harmed and their healthy state is maintained. Accidents, traumatic or repetitive strain injuries can cause damage. This results in pain and discomfort and may increase the risk of developing osteoarthritis. Important aspects of joint protection include maintaining muscle strength, good posture, regular movement, proper body mechanics and not ignoring pain or discomfort.

## Six principles of joint protection:

### 1. Respect pain

- Pain is a sign that something is wrong.
- Ignoring pain will often make the condition worse.
- Pain felt during an activity means it is time to stop.
- Pain exceeding one hour after an activity may indicate the activity was too stressful.
- Tasks and activities that stress joints need to be broken up into smaller ones.



### 2. Maintain muscle strength and joint range of motion (ROM)

- When pain and stiffness is at a minimum, use joints to their maximum range and strength to maintain mobility.
- Passively move warmed joints during inflammatory stages.
- Use long flowing movements, straightening and bending joints during activities.
- Use full arm range when reaching for objects in high cupboards.

### 3. Use the strongest joints and muscles available when possible

- Carry bags on your forearm or over your shoulder.
- Use open palms and the weight of your body to move or open objects.
- Use hips to push doors open and feet to close drawers.
- Bend at the knees when lifting objects rather than bending the arms or



## 4. Avoid positions that put stress on joints

- Activities that involve a small grip (writing, brushing teeth, turning a key) can be made easier by enlarging handles or using adaptive equipment.
- Avoid tight pinching, squeezing or twisting of the hands.
- Avoid the development of deformities by performing turning motions (taps, jars, lids). toward the thumb side. For example, use your left hand to open and right hand to close a jar.
- Grip correctly by keeping the hand in alignment with the forearm and with the wrist slightly bent back.
- Avoid putting strain on your joints, for example, do not push yourself up from a seated position with your knuckles, but use the palm of your hand.



## 5. Avoid staying in one position for a long time

- Regularly alter your position and posture as excess fatigue and stiffness can occur from holding the same position for long periods.
- Use adaptive equipment to help eliminate static or held positions, for example use a card holder, book holder, spiked chopping board, speaker-phone and non-slip mat to stabilise items.

## 6. Distribute the workload over several joints

- Use both hands to carry and hold items.
- Carry objects close to the body so that larger muscles are used. Widen the gap between your feet so a base of support is maintained.
- Wear backpack over both shoulders.



For more information, please contact

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