

Understanding Arthritis

What is Arthritis?

- Arthritis refers to inflammation over small or large body joints. It can cause pain, swelling, stiffness and reduced mobility. This can affect your ability to perform activities of daily living (ADL).

There are 2 common types of arthritis:

- **Osteoarthritis:** when the connective tissue protecting your joints wear off due to overuse or previous injuries.
- **Rheumatoid arthritis:** when your body's immune system attacks healthy connective and joint tissues



Image retrieved from: https://www.freepik.com/free-vector/rheumatoid-arthritis-human-body-illustration_1142482.htm

What is Joint Protection?

- A self-management approach aimed at reducing the stress on joints to minimise further joint damage, thereby reducing pain.
- Making use of these principles in your ADLs allows your body to work in a safer way.

Principles of Joint Protection

Avoid Positions that Foster Deformity

Forceful and repetitive motions stress your joints.

- **Avoid tight gripping and twisting motions**
Enlarge your grip via modified ways or use assistive devices to reduce tight gripping (e.g. anti-slip cloth).



- **Spread the load across multiple joints**
Use both hands to support objects safely



- **Alternate the use of your hands** for repetitive tasks, where possible.
- **Push or slide heavy items** across surfaces instead of pulling them.



Use Larger, More Stable Joints

Larger, stronger joints allow for better distribution of heavy weights.

- Where appropriate, you may carry the loads on your forearm
- Keep the objects closer to your body.



- **Use a trolley to push heavy loads**
- Where appropriate, You may also use larger joints to push the trolley.



Respect Pain, Recognise Fatigue

Ignoring your pain and joint fatigue will cause you to overwork your body.

- **Eliminate or reduce activities** that cause joint pain.
- **Adapt or stop the activity** before pain sets in.
- **Stretch regularly** to maintain mobility.

Organise to Reduce Work Effort

Organise items according to how often you use them to reduce effort and strain.

- Store frequently used items are at waist/chest level.



Plan and Prioritise Your Activities

Balance activities and rest to minimise joint stress, pain, fatigue.

- Ask for help where possible.
- Plan rest breaks and pace yourself, stop for 30 seconds every five minutes to stretch.
- Plan activities ahead of time. Alternate between heavier and lighter tasks and prioritise tasks that may be more urgent.

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Department of Occupational Therapy

Joint Protection

