

Osteoarthritis often affects the joints of the hand, mainly the thumb and the small joints of the fingers. We asked people with osteoarthritis what they did when their hands were bothering them.

They told us...

- If your hands are stiff, soak them in warm water; if they are painful or swollen, try cold water.
- Try an “oil and glove” treatment (put mineral oil on your hands, apply rubber gloves and soak in hot water for 10 minutes).
- Use both hands for lifting and carrying.
- Do activities for short periods of time e.g. gardening. Change activities when your hands start to hurt. Pace yourself.
- See an occupational therapist or physiotherapist for a finger or thumb splint. Splints can provide support, take stress off your joints, reduce pain and increase strength in your hands.
- Use devices and equipment such as electric peelers and jar openers, and tools and utensils with oversized handles.
- Take your pain medication as prescribed by the doctor. Plan more difficult activities e.g., exercise and housework, 30 minutes after taking your pain medication.
- Learn simple exercises to keep your joints moving. Books and videos are available or visit The Arthritis Society Internet site (www.arthritis.ca). If you need an individualized program, see a physiotherapist or occupational therapist.

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