

## Protecting the joints in your hands is important to:

1. reduce joint stress and pain
2. reduce potential for deformity
3. make daily activities easier

**Always** use the following strategies, not just when your hands hurt:

<p><b>Respect pain</b></p>	<p>Ignoring pain can lead to increased pain          “No pain no gain” is not a strategy that works well for arthritis          Learn to distinguish “usual” vs. “not so usual” intensity of pain          Use a pain scale: (0=no pain, 5= moderate, 10=worst pain)          Activity resulting in increased <b>joint</b> pain and takes more than 2 hours to return to usual, should be modified or avoided</p>
<p><b>Plan your activities</b></p>	<p>Vary tasks/change hand position often          Take frequent rest breaks – use a timer as a reminder          Rest hands before they become tired or sore          Spread heavier tasks throughout the week          Alternate between hands (i.e. holding phone)          Organize workspace to ensure wrists and hands are in a good position (i.e. when working at the computer)</p>
<p><b>Use larger joints</b></p>	<p>Carry bag on shoulder or forearm.          Push items rather than carry them (i.e. use a wheeled cart for groceries). Pushing is easier on hands than pulling          Carry large or heavy items with two hands close to your body.          Close drawers/doors with your hip          Choose automatic doors when possible          If you have to use your hands to push up from a chair, use your <b>palms</b>. Better still, choose higher chairs or use a firm cushion to raise the seat height.</p>
<p><b>Use hand splints to:</b></p>	<p>Support wrist and finger joints in proper alignment at rest or during activity          Reduce joint pain and inflammation          Improve function  <b>Talk to your occupational or physiotherapist to discuss what splint option(s) will best meet your needs</b></p>

<p><b>Exercise principles</b></p>	<p>Use heat for 10 minutes before doing hand exercises          Add hand exercises into your daily routine, (i.e. while watching TV, listening to music, etc.)          Start with a few repetitions and increase as tolerated.          Quality is more important than quantity          If hand exercises increase pain, decrease or discontinue the exercises and consult with your physiotherapist or occupational therapist</p>
<p><b>Grip tips</b></p>	<p>Avoid prolonged or repetitive tight gripping/squeezing          Choose large-handled utensils/tools, or enlarge grips with foam tubing (i.e. foam pipe insulation)          Use light weight equipment          Use assistive devices or adapted tools (see below)</p>
<p><b>Helpful devices:</b></p>	<p>Non-slip material to help grip items, open jars/bottles, stabilize objects.          Jar seal-opener (i.e. jar key)          Electrical devices: can opener, jar opener, food chopper, etc.          Sharp tools, knives          Adapted kitchen aids (i.e. finger vegetable peeler, "L" shaped knife)          Lever taps and doorknobs          Book holder, e-reader, books on tape, headset          Key holder/extender          Spring-opening scissors          Button hook, zipper pull          Magnetic clasp (i.e. on jewellery)          Foam steering wheel cover          Touchpad or roller ball mouse, voice activated software  <b><i>Devices can often be found at medical supply, department, hardware and kitchen stores</i></b></p>

**Please discuss with an Arthritis Society therapist if you have questions.**