

Joint Protection for the Arms

OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY DEPARTMENT

IMPROVE YOUR MECHANICAL ADVANTAGE

Do not force yourself to do tasks which you do not seem to have the strength to do.

-use levers (eg. lever door handles) and friction (eg. rubber gloves) to decrease the force required

AVOID ACTIVITIES THAT REQUIRE STRONG GRIPPING

Gripping small handles increases the stress on the finger joints, especially the knuckles.

-use built up or padded handles on utensils to decrease the stress on the joints

AVOID STATIC POSITIONS *Examples: holding a book, playing cards*

-stretch joints through full range of movement during breaks

-use book rests and card holders

AVOID REPETITIVE MOVEMENTS *Examples: knitting, cleaning above shoulder height*

-use long, sweeping, circular motions when doing activities such as washing windows

TAKE FREQUENT REST BREAKS

Stop BEFORE you get tired and sore. Take frequent, short rest breaks. Use a timer as a reminder.

RESPECT PAIN

Modify or stop a task if you experience increased pain during or after the task, or at night.

USE LARGE JOINTS WHEN POSSIBLE

Large joints are less susceptible to damage and are supported by stronger muscles than small joints.

-use paper bags to carry groceries by 'hugging' the paper bag

-use jar openers and electric can openers

USE BOTH HANDS TO LIFT A HEAVY OBJECT

Divide the weight between both arms. Use wheeled trolley/cart for moving heavier items.

AVOID WEIGHT-BEARING THROUGH THE ARMS AND HANDS

Use firm cushions, raised chairs, raised toilet seats, and bath benches to make getting up easier.

MINIMIZE REACHING

Store frequently used items between shoulder and waist height.