

At home with arthritis

Simple steps for managing in the home



How can this booklet help?

When you have arthritis, joint pain and weakness can make normal activities around the home difficult.

You might find some tasks cause pain or strain, and other activities become almost impossible. But don't throw in the towel just yet! There are many ways that you can protect your joints from pain and strain and also make jobs around the home easier to manage. This booklet includes information on:

- Ways to reduce joint stress and pain
- How to incorporate these techniques into your daily life

- How to find a healthy balance between activity and rest
- Aids and equipment that can make your daily activities simpler and less tiring.

The information in this booklet has been reviewed by a panel of people with arthritis and medical experts to make sure it is current and relevant to your needs. So, if you're looking for ways to take the pain and strain out of managing at home, this is the booklet for you!

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Joint Protection brochure,
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The information in this booklet has been obtained from various sources and has been reviewed by Arthritis Australia. It is intended as an educational aid and should not be used in place of medical advice. It can be reproduced in its entirety but cannot be altered without permission from Arthritis Australia.

The National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) publication *How to present the evidence for consumers: preparation of consumer publications* (2000) was used as a guide in developing this booklet.



Protecting your joints

Joints affected by arthritis are usually weaker and less stable than 'normal' joints.

This makes them more vulnerable to damage, particularly from twisting or repetitive movements. As soon as you find out you have arthritis, it is important to start looking after your joints. Small changes in the way you do things can greatly reduce the stress on your joints and help prevent problems becoming worse in the future.

Here are some ways you can look after your joints:

Pace yourself

If you carefully plan and organise your activities you can make the most of your energy. Pacing helps you to finish what you want to do without increasing your pain. Here are some simple tips to help you pace your activities:

- Take frequent, short breaks. For example, do the activity for a set time, then take a short break, then do a bit more. You might find that by taking short breaks you will still be able to finish the activity without causing stress to your joints and increasing your pain
- Break up tasks into smaller bits. For example, divide your shopping into smaller bags so it is easier to carry and causes less stress on your joints. Make use of online shopping and home delivery especially for heavy items like milk. Rather than trying to clean the entire house, just do one or two rooms each day or have a rest between rooms
- Try to plan activities across a day or week to build in rest and times that are less busy. Consider which tasks are a priority and what you can allocate to others or put off to another time



- Try to avoid scheduling tasks in succession that might require you to over-exert a specific area of your body e.g. alternate a sitting task, such as computer work, with a standing task, such as cleaning
- Making a list also means that you have control over how much you do. If you are having a 'flare' of your arthritis, you can still try to stick to your daily plan but have more frequent, short rest breaks
- Try to prioritise jobs. Do the hardest tasks when you are feeling your best
- On a good day, be careful not to do more than you planned as you may feel the effects the following days.



Balance work and rest

When doing tasks around the house, set a steady pace and take a break BEFORE you get tired and sore.

Alternate periods of rest and activity during the day. As a rough guide, try to take a 10-15 minute rest every one and a half hours. You can also rest different joints and muscles throughout the day by regularly changing activities. For example, switch from an activity that requires standing, to one that allows you to sit so that you can rest your legs and back.

Remember, don't overdo things on 'good days' as it could result in pain and fatigue the following days.

Respect pain

The way you use your joints can increase the pain and strain you feel. Over time, the way you use your joints can also make your joints more deformed. This is why it is important to listen to your body and take notice of pain. Pain can serve as a warning. Pushing through pain can make it worse and can also increase stress, fatigue and joint damage. It is important to:

- Understand your limits. Take note of activities which cause you pain or cause your joints to swell
- Work within your limits of pain. Instead of working through pain you should think about changing the way you do that activity to minimise pain and protect your joints from further damage. Stop activities before you become really tired or before they cause



excessive pain. If you have extra or unusual pain for more than one to two hours after an activity, you've done too much. Next time, reduce the amount of time spent on that activity or do less

- If you experience pain, take a break and then gradually resume your activity at a slower pace.

Many people with arthritis have some amount of pain all the time. While pain messages should always be respected, a fear of pain can stop you from living an active life and can lead to further problems. Many people will give up on an activity if it hurts. However it is better to keep doing these activities a little at a time, with plenty of rests, rather than give up altogether something which you enjoy. So keep moving within the sensible limits described above.

Work smarter, not harder

Look for ways that you can use tools or your environment to help you accomplish tasks. For example:

- Slide objects along a bench rather than lifting them
- Take advantage of carts or trolleys when transporting large items
- Use reach extending tools to get those out of the way items
- Shop smarter by using online shopping services on the internet to research and compare products. Use home delivery or 'click and collect' service to limit lifting and carrying
- Swap items you use frequently for lightweight or plastic versions.

Use the strongest and largest muscles and joints for the job

Use your strongest and largest joints and muscles to distribute weight and reduce joint stress and pain. For example:

- Use your thigh muscles instead of your back to squat and lift an object
- Use your forearms to carry bags or trays rather than your wrists or fingers
- Carry items with your palms open
- Use two hands to pick up objects whenever you can.

Use joints in their most stable position

Muscles and tendons are at their strongest when the joints are in straight alignment. Try to avoid

or change activities that put your affected joints into unstable or awkward positions. For example:

- When holding objects, try to keep your wrists straight and your fingers in line with your knuckles and wrist. Check the way you hold the kettle or iron, or how you carry a shopping bag
- When working at a table or bench, sit or stand as close as you can, facing your work, and reduce stretching and bending. If the table or bench is too low and you find yourself bending over it, consider sitting on a chair or stool instead of standing
- When carrying or lifting objects hold them close to your body.



Change the way an activity is done

Simply changing the way you do an activity can save time, energy and unnecessary joint pain. Consider the following when performing your day to day tasks:

- Can you do this task while sitting rather than standing? For example, sit at the table when chopping vegetables for dinner
- Carry and lift items using two hands instead of one wherever possible
- Delegate tasks to others or ask for their assistance when necessary
- Use equipment (for example, a trolley) to carry items instead of lifting or carrying them
- Use equipment to make the job easier. For example, use a jar opener to get lids off jars and use long handled garden shears to prune trees and bushes
- Replace items in the home that are difficult to use with items that have been designed with your needs in mind, e.g. swap standard taps for lever taps, or replace a barrel shaped vacuum for an upright vacuum to minimise bending.

Avoid staying in one position for too long

Staying in the same position for long periods can lead to tired muscles

and stiff joints. It is generally recommended to change positions or stretch every 20 minutes. For example:

- Release your grip every 10 to 15 minutes while writing or doing activities involving gripping with your hands or fingers
- Get up out of your chair during television commercial breaks
- Get out of the car and stretch every hour during long car trips
- Take a break from the computer every 15 to 20 minutes.



Avoid positions leading to joint deformity

Inflammation can stretch and weaken joints. This can make joints more vulnerable to damage. Try to avoid positions or grips that put extra stress and force on joints. For example:

- Select a writing instrument that is comfortable for your grip
- Use a wireless headset so that your neck and arm are not in uncomfortable positions while talking on the phone
- Select an ergonomic keyboard and position the keyboard at a comfortable height for typing
- Select a mouse that allows you to rest your arm in a more neutral position
- Use one pillow to support your neck in a straight line with your body while sleeping/resting.



Use good body mechanics and posture

Always maintain good posture when sitting or standing. For example:

- When standing, spread your weight evenly on both legs
- When sitting, use a chair with a firm or supportive back rest. Try to avoid soft, 'saggy' couches
- Use long handled tools (for example, dustpans, brooms and mops) to avoid bending and stooping. Long handled shoe horns, bath/shower sponges, toe wipers, and grabbers (to help you pick things off the floor without bending) may also be useful
- Plan your work space so items are at a convenient height and you don't have to stoop or stretch as you work
- Organise your work space so the items you use most often are within easy reach.





Putting it into practice

There are many products with useful features that can be purchased to help you protect your joints.

When shopping, look for:

- Larger/thicker handles - these provide an easier grip and reduce stress placed on small joints
- Longer handles - these will extend your reach, reducing bending and stress to your back
- Lever handles - these reduce twisting forces that may damage small joints and cause pain
- Non-slip products – these can help reduce the risk of falls and make it easier to grasp slippery items
- Items that are lightweight (travel irons, microwave cookware)
- Containers that have tabs to make them easier to open and close
- Avoid packaging that requires a high level of fine motor skills or strength to open

- Trolleys and small furniture on wheels (laundry trolleys, small tables, storage baskets)
- Go electric - take advantage of electrically powered devices that will save you energy and reduce stress to your joints, such as an electronic toothbrush and food processors.

An occupational therapist, physiotherapist or the Independent Living Centre can provide advice about all aspects of managing daily activities when you have arthritis, including how to find these types of products when shopping. See the 'Want to know more' section of this booklet on page 32 for further details.



Here are some other practical tips to help make household jobs easier on your joints:

Gardening

- Use long handled tools to eliminate bending
- Wrap foam or twist rubber bands around handles for a softer, more flexible and larger surface grip
- Mount a mailbox on your garden fence and store your tools in it
- When watering, use smaller containers with handles to reduce the weight you have to carry
- Use a pair of gloves designed to increase your grip and minimise the pressure on painful finger joints
- Avoid staying in the same position for a long period of time. Don't give your joints the chance to become stiff. Release your grip every 10 to 15 minutes. Use a small plastic bucket for weeds or clippings. As it fills faster it will encourage you to stop, change position or rest more frequently.

Housekeeping

- Do not rush! Pace yourself and take regular rest breaks
- Have a plan of attack. Spring clean one room per week and then do simple maintenance, such as tidying, at other times



- Use a trolley, plastic bucket or basket to transport the cleaning supplies
- If you have a two storey home, have cleaning supplies on both floors to avoid carrying the products up and down stairs
- Enlist the assistance of family, friends or paid help
- Wearing gloves can give you a better grip – particularly when scrubbing or cleaning
- Make use of long handled dusters and cleaners, e.g. cobweb brooms, a squeegee on shower screens
- Use wet wipes or baby wipes for dusting
- Lightweight sweepers and mops (many with inbuilt detergent sprays) can be used in place of heavy mops, buckets or vacuums.



Shopping

- Use a trolley when shopping so you don't have to hold and carry heavy bags. Lifting heavy items can place pressure on joints
- Limit the number of items in each bag so that they are not too heavy. Ask the checkout operator to pack your groceries evenly into a number of bags rather than just one or two heavy ones
- Attach a shopping bag handle to a plastic shopping bag to make it easier to hold
- Look for shops that have change rooms with comfortable chairs so that you can sit to try on clothing
- Include a stop for a drink or meal during longer shopping trips so you have a chance to rest
- Take advantage of parcel pick up
- Consider doing your shopping online and have it delivered to your door.



Driving and car access

- If getting in and out of the car is a problem there are many transfer aids that could be of assistance. These include:
 - handy bars
 - car seat slide pads
 - turn table seat pads
 - roller sheets
 - grip handle straps.
- To close doors, use a belt looped through the door handle on the inside of the car. Put your arm through the loop and swing the door closed
- Extra wide rear view mirrors and blind spot mirrors can assist if you have difficulty turning to check mirrors when driving.

Clothing and getting dressed

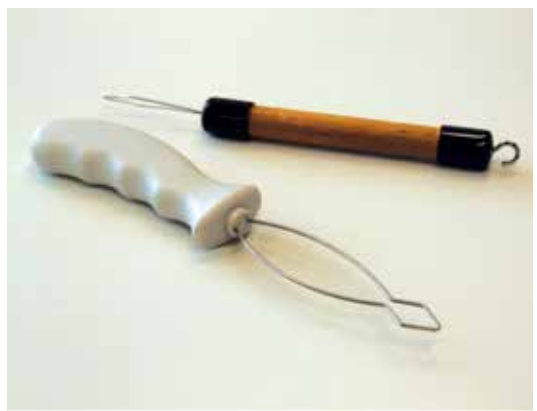
Socks and shoes

- Stocking, sock and pantyhose aids may be helpful if you have difficulty bending down to reach your feet. Special aids to assist in putting on compression stockings are also available
- Shoe horns (especially long handled) are very helpful for putting on shoes
- Elastic shoelaces can be used instead of standard shoelaces
- Look for shoes that can be easily adjusted at different points around your feet for easier use, eg. adjustable straps at the ankle, middle and front of the foot

- If you have odema (swelling) of your feet during the day, you may need to wear different shoes at different times of the day.

Buttons/zips

- Button hooks can make doing up buttons easier. They are used by passing the aid through the buttonhole to catch the button and then pulling the button back through the hole
- You could also sew Velcro on the back of the button and on the hole where the shirt is, so the shirt can easily be done up and still has the appearance of a button
- Sometimes the end of a button aid has a hook for looping





through zips to assist in fastening them. You could also loop a ribbon or elastic through the zip hole.

Bras

- Front fastening bras are a lot easier to use than back fastening bras
- Velcro fastening bras are also available
- You may find it easier to use a T-shirt style bra or slip with inbuilt shelf bra with no fastening that pulls on over your head
- Most people do not wear the correct size bra. Being fitted by a specialist gives you the



opportunity to try different styles and may provide more support which can reduce pain in the upper back, neck and shoulders

- Try a different style. Some people find that swapping to a sports bra, racer-back, or under wire styles may be easier to manage and more supportive.

Bedroom

Lighting

- Use a night light or bedside lamp for good visibility to prevent tripping. Sensor lights which will activate only when you get up are also available
- Keep a flashlight nearby in case of an unexpected power outage.

Making the bed

- Lifting a mattress can be difficult. Ask a family member for assistance or use a lightweight mattress
- Non-fitted sheets can be easier to handle
- Quilts can be lighter to lift and move than blankets.

Getting in and out of bed

- Adjustable beds come with features such as raising and lowering the height and raising and lowering the backrest for ease of getting in and out of bed and sitting up
- Bed sticks and rope ladders provide an anchor point for you to grasp to assist with moving in bed
- Getting out of bed can be made easier by rolling onto your side.

Then slide your legs out of bed and slowly push up into a sitting position so you are sitting on the edge of the bed. Wait a few minutes before standing up. A bed stick can also be of help

- Select a bed that is an appropriate height for you. Beds that are too high or too low can be difficult to get in and out of easily.



Laundry and bathroom

Ironing and washing

- Purchase permanent press clothes which do not require any ironing
- Use a lightweight iron, such as a travel iron
- Use a portable clothes airer rather than pegging clothes on the line
- Store powders, liquids and other containers at a level which avoids the need to bend or reach up high for them
- Avoid double handling of laundry, hang clothes on hangers where possible
- Consider using front loading appliances on pedestals rather than top loading appliances
- Use a laundry trolley instead of carrying a basket
- Tongs or a long handled reaching device can be used to remove clothes from a front loader. This prevents leaning down into the machine
- If squeezing standard pegs is difficult, consider using pegs which do not require a pinching or squeezing action.

Showering hints

- A shower stool, which allows you to sit while showering, can give

you more energy for washing and drying yourself

- A shower head wand can help position the water without having to assume uncomfortable postures
- When taking a shower, put the soap in a cloth bag or a stocking and hang it around the taps. Wash yourself with the soap (still in the bag/stocking). This will prevent having to bend down to pick up the soap if you drop it
- Consider installing grab rails in your shower or beside the toilet to make it easier to get in and out. These need to be installed into wall studs to make them stable
- Use non-slip mats, tread or strips on the floor and in the shower/bath
- Drying yourself can be difficult if your shoulders and elbows are painful and stiff. Using a towelling dressing gown immediately after your shower will save a lot of effort with drying
- Long handled sponges and toe wipers assist with drying
- Strategically placed hooks, small shelves and hanging racks allow you to store shampoo and other items within easy reach.

Lounge room

Chair selection

- If a chair is too low, it can be difficult to get in and out. Chair raisers can be placed under the legs of a chair to make the chair higher and easier to use
- If getting in and out is particularly difficult, electric lift chair recliners are available. These can electronically assist you to move from a sitting position to standing (via a remote, controlled by you)
- Armrests are also a good addition for a chair and can assist in standing up
- Avoid chairs with excessive cushioning. After sinking down



into the chair it can be difficult to get back up again

- It is important that the chair you choose is comfortable, supportive and beneficial in maintaining a good posture
- If you find getting up difficult because the seat is too soft or sinking, try placing thick cardboard under the seat to make the base firmer. If you usually sit in the same spot on the lounge, swap your seat cushion for one from a less used place as it may be firmer. Alternatively, buy a new firmer cushion to fit your lounge
- Pay attention to the way you get up from sitting in a chair. A physiotherapist or occupational therapist can show you the safest method for you.



Lounge room setup

- Ensure you have a phone close by to avoid rushing to answer it and possibly tripping. Cordless phones are good for this purpose. Some emergency call systems let you answer your home phone without leaving your chair
- Use a pouch that hangs over the chair armrest to hold items such as the cordless telephone, or keep the phone within easy reach on a coffee table
- Try to keep the room clutter free and remove any unnecessary rugs or mats
- Place a non-slip rug grip under rugs and mats to reduce the risk of tripping over them.





General household

Slippery surfaces

- Non-slip socks (standard socks with a non-slip grip on the bottom) can prevent slipping on tiled or wooden floors. These are available from supermarkets and department stores
- Use non-slip rug grips or underlay under rugs that tend to move
- Try to keep floors dry and mop up any spills or wet puddles as soon as possible



- Non-slip floorings in areas such as bathrooms, kitchens and laundries are important. Non-slip products (for example, self-adhesive non-slip strips, etching and other floor treatments) can make these areas less slippery.

Tap turners

- A tap turner is a portable lever device that can assist with the turning action required to operate a tap. It reduces strain on the fingers and wrist and can be used away from the home because of its portability
- Alternatively, lever taps could be installed.

Environmental Controls

- Many devices allow you to control your home environment remotely, for example, remote controls for garage doors, sensor lights or keypad operated door locks. Most

of these types of controls can be installed to existing structures in the home

- A number of products and applications (apps) exist that allow you to use your mobile phone to control your home environment, e.g. turn lights and heating on/off.

Home office

- Ensure your computer screen and keyboard are ergonomically set up on a desk of an appropriate height with a comfortable, supportive chair. If possible, ask an occupational therapist or physiotherapist for advice on how best to set up your work space
- Select a cursor control device that doesn't require you to move excessively or assume an uncomfortable posture. An upright mouse or trackball may be a good alternative to a standard computer mouse
- Computer accessories such as voice-recognition software (which eliminates the need to type) can make accessing a computer easier
- Store regularly accessed files and paperwork on shelves and in drawers that don't require you to bend down or reach up

- If you use a laptop or tablet, don't forget to consider your body position when using the device. Try not to sit on the lounge or in bed for long periods when using your devices as this can encourage poor sitting posture. Sit in a supportive chair at a desk or table and take frequent breaks. Use an alarm or timer to remind you to move
- Stable tables and stands can help with positioning. A stylus, external keyboard or a mouse may be easier to use than internal features.

Kitchen and cooking

Ideas for setting up your kitchen

- Organise your storage system and keep items where they can be easily reached, preferably at waist level. De-clutter your kitchen. Consider which and how many cups, plates, saucepans etc. you use regularly. Make sure these items are easily accessible, put everything else away
- Group particular items (for example, breakfast requirements) on a tray to minimise trips to the pantry. Keep items close to where you use them so that they are always easily accessible



- Use drawers, slide-out shelves and 'Lazy Susans' to improve access to storage
- Hang utensils for easier access
- Use a trolley to carry several items from the refrigerator or pantry to the work area
- Sit on a high stool while cooking or washing dishes
- Keep the rubbish bin in a handy position
- Consider installing lever taps or quarter-turn taps.

Simplifying your work

- Knives: special ergonomic knives make cutting and slicing easier. Serrated blades require less pressure than straight-edged knives. Keep knives sharp and ready to use
 - Breadboards: many designs of chopping boards are available.
- These have guards to stop bread from sliding, and spikes to put vegetables on for one-handed slicing, folding ends for sliding items into pans. An extra thick board can help if your kitchen benches are low
- Pot and pan holders: these devices can be attached to your stove to allow one-handed stirring
 - Non-slip mats: use these to hold your plates and cutlery in place
 - Jar openers: many different types of jar, bottle and tube openers are now available
 - Electric plug puller: this device fits around an electrical plug and makes it easier to remove it from the power point
 - Adapted cutlery and crockery: these are specially designed for easy gripping
 - Buy saucepans and pots with two handles for easier lifting
 - Look for lightweight crockery and kitchen items
 - Opt for utensils with a large, comfortable grip
 - Disposable pans, non-stick sprays and aluminium foil and baking paper make cleaning up a breeze
 - Check out electrical items that may be easier to use such as





hand-held mixers, electric knives, juicers, blenders, and food processors. Make sure you can easily dismantle for cleaning and press the switches

- Hold stirring spoons like a dagger to prevent joint stress
- Use plastic bags instead of plastic film wrap
- Choose a kettle with the handle across the top, and don't overfill
- Choose plastic measuring jugs, spoons and other items. Plastic microwave cookware is available for a wide variety of foods. Look for styles with handles, large clips and steam vents
- Look for a grater that has a non-slip base and a handle on the top
- A sponge is easier to squeeze out than a cloth
- Wipe down benches with your hand flat, not scrunched
- Use a dish drainer instead of drying with a tea towel.

Food packaging

Look for arthritis-friendly food packaging that makes it easier on your joints when preparing meals. Wherever possible, try to avoid products that require the use of tools like scissors or sharp knives to open packaging, such as required with plastic clamshell packaging. Also avoid packaging that requires a high level of fine motor skills or strength to open. Some packaging caps have more than one seal that may be hidden, such as small tabs on induction seals.

Here are some ways to manage packaging if your hands and fingers are affected by arthritis:

- Canned food: look for a can opener with a large turner and locking handles, or preferably an electric can opener
- Plastic bags: look for food that is packaged in a resealable bag, or has a large opening notch to facilitate easy tearing. For all food that is packaged in non-resealable plastic bags, simply cut the plastic bag with kitchen shears and seal with a peg or food clip. Alternatively, transfer the contents to an airtight container

- Cardboard boxes: slip a blunt knife under the flap of the box, and run it along the edge
- Bread: use a food clip or peg to seal your bread bag rather than using a twister tie
- Containers with foil/plastic coverings: look for packaging with large overhanging textured pull tabs or packaging that can be easily punctured without having to use a tool. When the seal is not easy to open, use a sharp knife to cut a cross in the covering, and peel back each section
- Milk cartons: use a carton pourer and sealer, or opt for plastic, one-litre milk bottles which are lighter and easily opened with a jar opener
- Jars: use a specially designed device to open and close jar lids easily. Where possible, choose plastic over glass
- Vacuum-sealed jars: a jar opener releases the vacuum seal and lifts the lid slightly to break the seal. Some new jar lid designs such as orbit closures can allow the seal to be broken more easily
- Flip-top lids: look for a flip top lid with a large lip that is easy to open. A multi opener will assist with opening flip-top lids on sauce bottles, medication bottles, or other bottles with this type of lid that are more difficult to open
- Bottles: a bottle cap opener will help not only with ordinary bottles, but also bottles with safety caps (found on some medication bottles)
- Water bottles: single use light-weight plastic water bottles with twist-off caps can be tricky to open, look for a design that provides grip or ask for assistance opening the bottle from the cashier. Alternatively carry a refillable water bottle you find easy to open instead
- Tetra packs: look for tetra packs with flip top lids. Simply break the seal with a knife and seal with the flip top lid. If you can't find a flip top lid, use kitchen shears to cut the tetra pack – never use a knife
- Continuous plastic seals on bottles/jars: no special devices are currently available for this type of seal. Ask family or friends to break the seal for you
- Plastic bottle caps with perforated plastic seals (such as those on plastic milk bottles): run a pair of sharp kitchen shears around the lid to break the seal. Standard jar openers will also work on the larger jars (for example, peanut butter jars) with this seal. It is important to position the gadget above the seal.

Food preparation tips

- Store dry goods in plastic containers that are easy to open
- When tired, consider using products such as frozen microwaveable vegetables, fish that can be steamed in a bag, rice pouches or frozen meals
- Cook double quantities and freeze half for later
- Use your microwave to cook sauces straight in the serving jug, instead of using a saucepan from which you have to pour the sauce
- Use sauce mixes and cake mixes instead of cooking from scratch.

Meat, fish, poultry

- Tuna, salmon and deli meats are available in easily opened foil packaging
- Buy meat that's already diced or cut into serving sizes. Ask your butcher to de-bone roasts
- Purchase cold meats from the deli to avoid dealing with difficult packaging.

Dairy products

- Buy grated cheeses in easy-peel, re-sealable packages
- Many yoghurt and dairy desserts are packaged with foil lids. To open, cut a cross in the foil and peel back each section from the centre

- Opt for cheese slices and cheese cubes over blocks of cheese
- Choose one-litre milk bottles, or tetra pack long-life milk, over milk in a carton
- If purchasing a carton, use a pourer and sealer for easy access.

Fruit

- Diced fruit is available in packaging with 'easy peel' lids. Cut a cross in the foil and peel back
- Fruit can now be purchased in large, twist top containers that are easily stored in the fridge. Keep the lid slightly ajar to enable easier opening
- When slicing round fruit (for example, apples) cut them in half and place the flat surface on the chopping board.

Vegetables

- 'Heat and serve' containers with foil lids and 'microwave-ready' vegetables are available in many supermarkets
- Most greengrocers and supermarkets sell vegetables pre-packed and pre-sliced. If these are not available, ask your greengrocer to cut the vegies for you
- Enjoy frozen and canned vegetables and packaged salads

- Choose vegetables that do not need peeling (for example, broccoli and zucchini) and cook vegetables whole
- Use a steamer or bamboo steaming basket to cook vegetables
- Microwave steam bags are available for steaming fresh or frozen vegetables
- Remove vegetables from a saucepan with a slotted spoon, or use a saucepan strainer
- Use a potato peeler with a large grip.

Other

- Buy sliced bread and use a peg to seal your bread after opening
- Buy pre-made pancake mixes to avoid having to mix the ingredients yourself
- Purchase rice in re-sealable plastic packages, or twist top containers
- Put your colander in the sink and rest the full saucepan on the draining board to easily empty cooked pasta or rice.

A diet consistent with the *Australian Guide to Healthy Eating* recommends people consume a variety of foods across and within the five food groups and avoid foods that contain too much added fat, salt and sugar.



Want to know more?

Your State/Territory Arthritis Office can provide you with details of support services for people with arthritis and other information resources that may be useful.

Freecall anywhere in Australia: **1800 011 041** or visit **www.arthritisaustralia.com.au**

An occupational therapist (OT) is a health professional who can advise you on how to take stress and strain off joints affected by arthritis. They look at your activities at home or work, then show you ways to simplify daily tasks and protect your joints. OTs can also advise you on any special equipment you might need, including splints and devices to make everyday tasks easier on your joints, such as those mentioned in this booklet.

A physiotherapist (physio) can advise you on exercise, posture, walking aids and other ways to look after your joints and muscles.

Your GP or specialist can provide a referral to an OT or physio, or you can contact a private therapist directly at any time.

Find a private OT by contacting Occupational Therapy Australia at www.otaus.com.au or 1300 682 878

To find a private physio contact the Australian Physiotherapy Association at www.physiotherapy.asn.au or 1300 306 622.

If you have private health insurance, your health fund may cover part of the cost of seeing an OT or physio.

If your GP refers you to an OT or physio as part of a care plan, you may be able to have five sessions per year funded by Medicare. Ask your GP for more information.

OTs and physios are also available in the public system, such as at a community health centre or public hospital. There is often a waiting list and you will usually need a referral

from your GP. These services are usually free or low cost.

Having arthritis can affect you emotionally, as well as physically. Many people with arthritis are frightened and/or frustrated by the impact arthritis might have on their everyday life and their future. It is common to feel frustrated or depressed if you are finding it difficult to keep doing your normal home, work or social activities. For more information about how to manage these feelings, see Arthritis Australia's *Arthritis and emotional wellbeing* information sheet.

You can find information about all types of equipment discussed in this booklet at an Independent Living Centre. These centres are located in each capital city and have displays of aids and devices that make daily tasks around the house easier. You can get advice, including where to purchase equipment, in person or over the phone. Occupational therapists are also available at the centres to provide advice about the equipment. You may need to make an appointment, and may be charged a fee, to see an occupational therapist. See Independent Living Centre

www.ilcaustralia.org or call 1300 885 886 to find your closest centre. If you're in the ACT call (02) 6205 1900 or in Tasmania call (03) 6334 5899. Note, the Independent Living Centre is called LifeTec in Queensland.

Online information

For access to quality online information about arthritis, start at the Australian Government's HealthInsite website, www.healthinsite.gov.au

Healthy eating

For advice on healthy eating and exercise, visit the Australian Government's A Healthy and Active Australia website, www.healthyactive.gov.au

For expert nutrition and dietary advice on how you can best meet your nutritional needs, contact an Accredited Practising Dietitian, see www.daa.asn.au

My contact details

My name:

Telephone:

My GP

Name:

Telephone:

My specialist

Name:

Telephone:

My support team

Name:

Telephone:

Name:

Telephone:

My medicines

Name	Dosage	Instructions

Arthritis Australia

Arthritis Australia is a not-for-profit organisation that provides support and information for all Australians affected by arthritis.

Contact your State/Territory Arthritis Office to find out about the range of awareness and education programs, support services and resources available.

Arthritis Infoline: 1800 011 041

www.arthritisaustralia.com.au

Arthritis ACT

Level 2B Grant Cameron
Community Centre
27 Mulley Street Holder ACT 2611
PO Box 4017 Weston Creek ACT 2611

Arthritis New South Wales

Suite 1.15 32 Delhi Road
North Ryde NSW 2113
Locked Bag 2216 North Ryde NSW 1670

Arthritis Northern Territory

Shop 18 Rapid Creek Business Village
48 Trower Road, Millner NT 0810
PO Box 452 Nightcliff NT 0814

Arthritis Queensland

1 Cartwright Street
Windsor QLD 4030
PO Box 2121 Windsor QLD 4030

Arthritis South Australia

118-124 Richmond Road
Marleston SA 5033

Arthritis Tasmania

19A Main Road
Moonah TAS 7009
PO Box 780 Moonah TAS 7009

Arthritis Western Australia

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