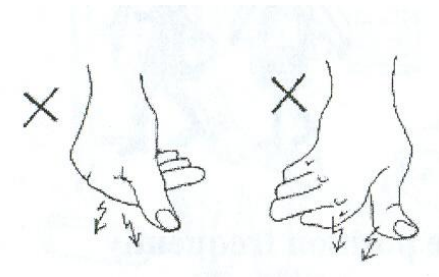


JOINT PROTECTION

If you have any further questions,
please contact your

Occupational Therapist.



Phone : (03) 520 9927

**Occupational Therapy Department
Wairau Hospital
Blenheim.**

Updated May 2009.

J: OT/ Client information /Joint Protection

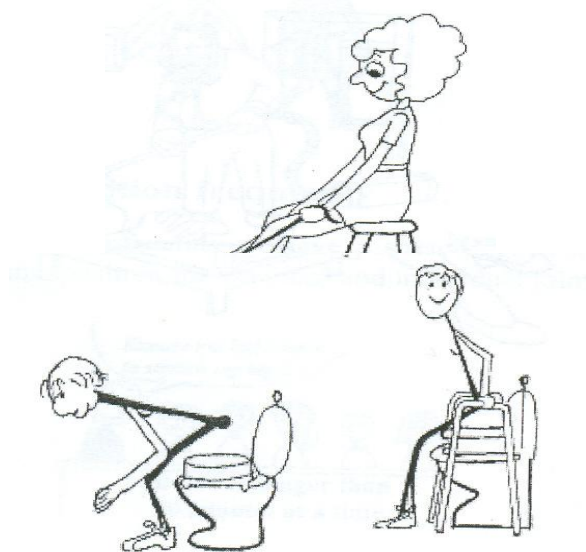


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9. Use prescribed aids and splints

Aids may be used to protect the joints and to simplify work. Many of these are commercially available (e.g. lightweight saucepans, electric mixers, utensils with large handles etc.).



Splints may be prescribed to support or rest an arthritic joint. If you have splints do use them.

Introduction:

What does joint protection mean?

Practicing joint protection means that when doing day to day activities you move in a way that places the least amount of stress and strain on your joints. This helps to prevent fatigue, pain, inflammation and potential joint deformities.

Have you ever found your finger joints stiff after writing or knitting for too long; or woken up with a sore neck from sleeping in a poor position?

To protect your joints you should observe these basic rules of joint protection.

- Rest frequently**
- Use joints correctly**
- Listen to pain**
- Exercise wisely**
- Simplify work**

These basic rules encompass the principles of joint protection explained on the following pages.

If you observe these principles you will minimize stress on your joints and therefore prevent unnecessary pain and damage.

Principles of Joint Protection

1. Respect Pain

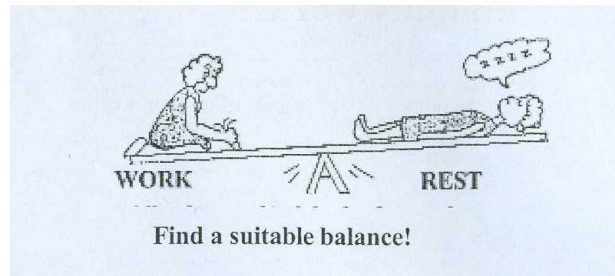
Exercise or work only to the point of pain. If you continue beyond the point of pain you risk damaging your joints.

Learn to gauge how long you can work at an activity without causing pain. Remember this will vary from individual to individual.

2. Balance Work and Rest

Rest allows the body to restore and repair itself, and improves endurance. For each person there is an individual balance between the amount of work they can do and the amount of rest they require in order to maintain their fullest pain-free function.

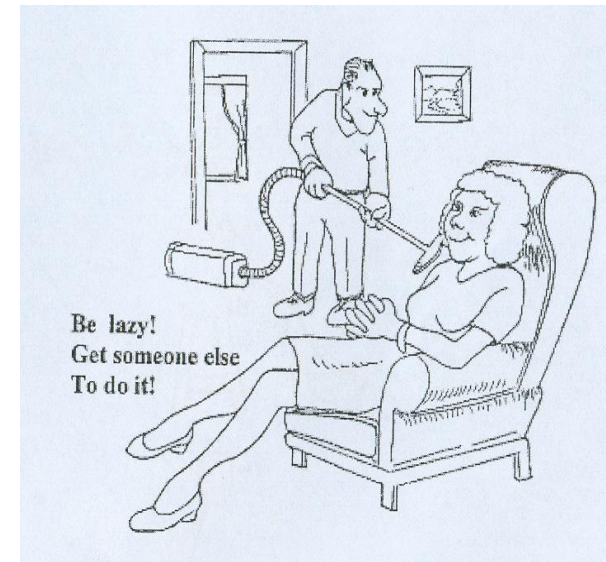
You need to work out for yourself what this balance is. Break up your activities with short, frequent rest periods rather than working to the point of exhaustion and then having a long rest. Plan your work so that you spread activities throughout the week.



8. Stop activities if they become too stressful

It is pointless and harmful to continue an activity, which is causing pain. Since the activity cannot always be avoided you should plan ahead so that you can rest or stop if necessary.

If you've been unwell remember – not to overdo it when you are feeling better. In other words if you know your own limitations and select activities accordingly, you should not get into the situation of being unable to stop a stressful activity.



6. Use the strongest or largest joints possible

Use the strongest or largest joint possible to avoid stressing smaller, weaker joints. Learn the correct lifting procedures – push and slide rather than lift. Use feet to close low cupboards, hips to open doors, carry handbag on forearm rather than in the fingers, carry two small parcels instead of one large parcel.

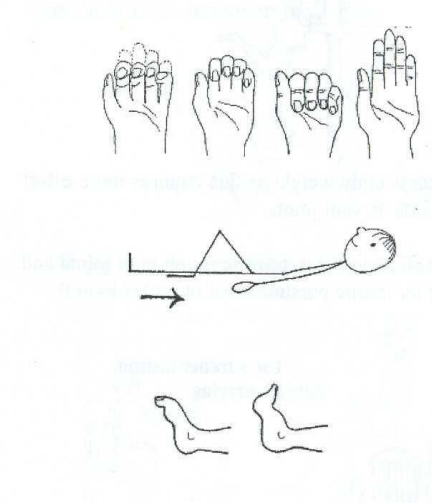


7. Change position frequently

Change positions frequently or have a stretch. Holding the same position for prolonged periods of time can lead to pain and stiffness. The frequent rest breaks suggested earlier will encourage you to change your posture (e.g. avoid sitting in the same position for too long) and individual joint position.

3. Maintain muscle strength and joint range of movement

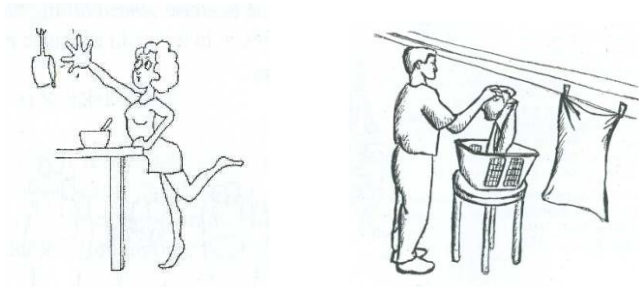
As muscles play an important role in supporting the joints, it is necessary to strengthen those muscles surrounding the joints in order to minimize joint damage and subsequent pain.



4. Reduce the effort needed to do a job.

Look at all the activities you perform and work out your priorities. Reduce effort by cutting out unnecessary steps. Sit rather than stand. Ask for assistance or give the job to someone else if it is too stressful.

Simplify your work by changing methods, equipment or the layout of your work area.



Avoid carrying excess body weight as this requires more effort and places extra stress on your joints.

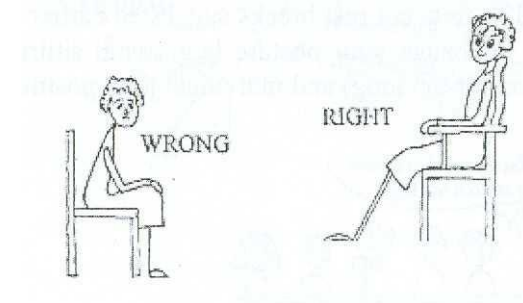


By reducing work effort you minimize stress on your joints and leave more energy for leisure pursuits.

5. Be conscious of joint positioning and posture.

Be conscious of joint positioning and posture at work, rest or leisure and the stresses that various activities transmit to the joints. This joints should be used in their most stable position, e.g. keep your back straight when lifting.

Avoid prolonged clenching of fists e.g. holding knives, and always endeavor to keep the fingers as flat as possible when performing tasks e.g. dusting or wiping down a bench. Avoid activities that encourage poor joint positioning.



Remember your feet, comfortable, correctly fitting shoes are essential to avoid discomfort in your feet.'