

Inflammatory Arthritis Education Series

Protecting Your Joints

This program has been reviewed and endorsed by



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CAPA Canadian Arthritis
Patient Alliance
experience · perspective · voice



Objectives

By the end of the session, you will:

- Identify daily activities that may be difficult due to inflammatory arthritis
- Learn strategies for making these activities easier
- Learn about assistive devices and their use in inflammatory arthritis

Why protect your joints?

- To reduce pain
- To make activities easier to do
- To make the best use of your energy and resources
- To put less strain on joints that may be stiff and sore

How to protect your joints

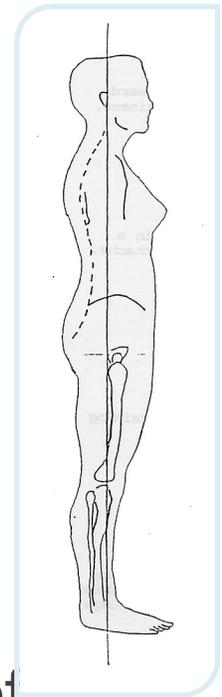
- Plan activities so you can develop a schedule that balances your energy requirements and stress on your joints
- Use proper posture
- Ask for help when needed
- Use assistive devices

Plan ahead

- Plan activities and how they will be completed
 - Divide activities in to small tasks (for example, vacuum a room one day and another room the next)
 - Keep things within reach at home and at work to optimize movement of affected joints

Use effective body mechanics

- Use proper posture when:
 - Standing: keep your head aligned with your body
 - Sitting: adjust height of chair, desk and worktable to minimize strain
 - Doing tasks: use largest joint available when doing an activity
- Change positions frequently
- Take frequent breaks to help prevent the overuse of muscle groups and joints



Use effective body mechanics

- Reduce effort and strain on affected joints
 - Avoid lifting when possible
 - Use large, strong muscles and joints rather than smaller, weaker ones (sling a purse over your shoulder instead of gripping one with your hand)
 - Use legs for lifting, not the back
 - Keep movements centred between the hips and shoulders
 - Keep loads close to the body and as light as possible
 - Divide loads between both arms or hands (not the fingers)

Ask for help when needed

- Understand your pain's signals
 - Recognize any limitations in you may have
 - Let your healthcare provider know if new limitations develop
- Delegate difficult tasks to others
- Lighten the load of whatever task you are trying to do by asking for help
 - Most people are willing to help if they are asked

Assistive devices

- Use assistive devices to make tasks easier
- Look for devices that provide:
 - Traction
 - Leverage
 - Enlarged grips
- Use splints or braces if needed



Choosing assistive devices

- Choices often depend on which joints are affected and the kind of problems you may be experiencing
- The devices help you avoid or minimize movements that stress affected joints



- If you are having difficulty, a healthcare provider can help you choose the appropriate aids
 - You may require a doctor's referral

Uses for assistive devices

- Assistive devices can be used for:
 - Turning and opening (rubber materials, can openers)
 - Holding and grasping (thicker pens, built-up kitchen utensils and gardening tools)
 - Reaching (long-handled devices)
 - Carrying and lifting (rolling carts or trolleys)
 - Walking (canes, foot orthotics, proper shoes)



Choosing proper footwear

- Footwear can go a long way to easing foot, knee and / or hip pain
- Choose shoes with:
 - Good arch support
 - Firm sole that does not twist
 - Firm heel counter
 - Laces
 - Light weight
 - Rocker and/or non-slip sole
 - Enough room for insoles
 - Wide and deep enough space for toes



Local community resources

Check with your healthcare provider to find out where you can find:

- Assistive devices
- Supportive footwear
- Foot orthotics
- Hand, wrist and finger splints
- Braces

Key messages

- To make daily activities easier to do and reduce pain and damage to your joints:
 - Plan ahead
 - Use proper posture
 - Ask for help when needed
 - Use assistive devices
- Get a referral to see an occupational therapist or physiotherapist for more in-depth assessments and assistance
- Ask about funding resources that may be available to you

Resources

- Arthritis Consumer Experts www.jointhehealth.org
- The Arthritis Foundation www.arthritis.org
- The Arthritis Society www.arthritis.ca
- Canadian Arthritis Patient Alliance www.arthritispatient.ca
- Canadian Psoriasis Network www.cpn-rcp.com
- Canadian Spondylitis Association www.spondylitis.ca
- Rheuminfo www.rheuminfo.com
- Canadian Medical Association www.cma.ca
- Canadian Nurses Association www.cna-nurses.ca/cna
- Canadian Assoc. of Occupational Therapists www.caot.ca
- Canadian Physiotherapy Association www.thesehands.ca
- Dietitians of Canada www.dietitians.ca

Resources

- Lorig K, Fries J. *The Arthritis Helpbook: A Tested Self-management Program for Coping with Arthritis and Fibromyalgia*. Sixth edition. Perseus Books, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2006.
- Afshar B. *The Arthritis Foundation's Tips for Good Living with Arthritis*. Arthritis Foundation, Atlanta, Georgia, 2001.