



IDEAS TO MAKE YOUR HOME USER FRIENDLY

Adjust Your Life and Your Home

1. Organize your kitchen to make it easier for you to use
2. Find new ways to do old things
3. Adapt old equipment or get new things to assist you to get the job done with less energy or effort (less pain and less joint destruction)

By considering these three things, you can start the process to make your home more user-friendly. To cope with your arthritis, start by respecting your pain, protecting your joints, and learning to work efficiently and smartly. Here are some ideas:

RESPECT YOUR PAIN! Don't try to do too much when you hurt. Pain is a protective mechanism. It is your body's sign that says, "Hey, take it easy." When your joints hurt, work to reduce your pain. See a doctor for help to control your pain. Consult with an occupational therapist for specific suggestions on how you can reduce pain by protecting your joints or modifying your home environment.

PROTECT YOUR JOINTS: **There are so many ways to protect your joints.** Look at how you can avoid causing more stress to painful joints.

- a. Use the largest or strongest joints to do activities (rather than the finger, use your hand; rather than your hand, use your forearm; rather than your forearm, use your elbow, and so on. Try to use the largest muscles groups, rather than the feathering and delicate hand muscles.)
- b. Use two hands whenever possible, rather than just one hand.
- c. Avoid pinching or holding things tightly with your fingers, or with one hand.
- d. Avoid holding heavy bowls with the thumb and fingers, instead move with two hands, using the palms of your hands (palms up to carry something). Use bowl stabilizers or other assistive equipment to help you.
- e. Use scissors to cut packages, rather than using your fingers.
- f. Rather than wringing out a wet wash cloth, put the wash cloth over the faucet, then squeeze the water out using the palms of your two hands.
- g. When possible, try to use the next biggest joint to get the job done.
- h. Push or pull rather than carry.
- i. Rather than chopping finely, chop coarsely; rather than chopping coarsely, use a food processor.

WORK EFFICIENTLY AND SMARTLY

1. Think about what you have to do and plan ahead:

- a. Gather your food items and cooking utensils in one place, if possible
- b. To save energy, sit when possible to prepare your meals
- c. Combine actions whenever possible to reduce unnecessary work.
- d. Avoid unnecessary work (rather than drying dishes, let them drip dry; rather than chopping finely, chop more coarsely!)

2. Organize your kitchen to make reaching and lifting as easy as possible.

- a. Place the most frequently used things in your immediate comfort zone
- b. Place the heaviest things in your immediate comfort zone
- c. Place the lightest things in the higher or lower spaces
- d. Put things used for similar tasks in the same area
- e. Consider using a utility cart to help carry things around the kitchen

3. Rather than preparing every single meal, have some frozen preparations available.

- a. Purchase frozen vegetables that are already cut, chopped or prepared.
- b. Purchase frozen meals and use the microwave.
- c. On pain reduced days, prepare a couple extra meals you can freeze to eat on the not so good days.

4. Pace yourself: Start by asking yourself the following

- **Is this task really necessary?**
- **Is this the best way to do the task?**
- **Is this the best time to do the task?**
- **Am I the best person for the job?**

Once you have answered these questions, consider the following options:

- a. Do a little at a time.
- b. Avoid doing lots of really difficult tasks all at once.
- c. Combine some hard things with some easier to do things.
- d. Make your most complicated meals when you feel the best
- e. See if there are things other people can do for you
- f. Take frequent rest breaks

5. Be creative: Look in catalogs for things you can use that will reduce your pain, improve your abilities and prevent the destruction of your joints. Do it for yourself now!

Resources for this article:

<http://www.arthritis.org/conditions/DiseaseCenter/OA/default.asp>

<http://www.cdc.gov/nasd/docs/d001801-d001900/d001812/d001812.htm>

<http://www.thehealthpages.com/articles/ar-arthr.html>