

Living with Arthritis #1 (Household, Kitchen and Eating/Drinking)

Arthritis may cause difficulties with many daily activities including domestic tasks, eating and drinking, personal hygiene, general mobility within the home and community, employment tasks, driving and recreation activities. There are numerous ways to manage arthritis such as medication, diet, exercise, and joint protection techniques. It is also useful to consider any gadgets that may make tasks easier, and may enable participation in your chosen roles and activities.



JOINT PROTECTION AND ENERGY CONSERVATION

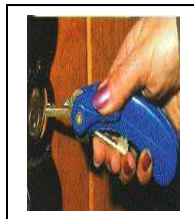
Basic joint protection and energy conservation principles assist in using equipment correctly and efficiently:

- Distribute an object's load over several joints by using two hands to lift an object.
- Use stronger, larger joints. For example, lifting shopping bags with your forearm places the load on your shoulder.
- Use joints in the most stable and functional position, such as keeping your wrist extended when gripping to maximise your grip strength.
- Reduce effort by using labour saving devices such as electric can openers.
- Avoid lifting and try using a trolley.
- Avoid positions of deformity by using your palm to turn on taps and open jars. Also, try using built up handles to avoid having to use a strong grip.
- Take regular short breaks and change your position regularly.



HOUSEHOLD

Key turners can provide extra surface area to grasp and provide a better lever action. Lever taps or tap turners enable the user to use a pushing and pulling action rather than a twisting action. There are tap turners designed for specific style taps and universal tap turners to suit homes with varying styles of taps.



A reaching aid may assist people who have difficulty reaching for objects on the floor or on high shelves.

Scissors with a self-opening mechanism have an easier grasp which reduces fatigue.



Doorknobs can be replaced with lever style door handles or can be covered with a non-slip material to enable an easier grip.

Avoid carrying heavy items by using a kitchen or laundry trolley.

Other ideas include a globe grabber, a suction cup brush for washing up, and a light weight mop.

Commercially available equipment ideas include a light weight travel iron, and a long handle dust pan and broom.



KITCHEN

Utensils such as peelers with larger handles, make grasping and holding easier. Any existing utensils can also have handles built-up with slip-on foam tubing to provide an easier grip and keep the product lightweight.

Kettle tippers enable the user to safely tip the kettle rather than having to lift and pour a full kettle.



Jar and bottle openers are available in hand-held and mounted models

Stabilising boards eliminate the need to hold onto food or a utensil whilst cutting, grating and spreading.

An angled handle on a knife will place less stress on the wrist joint as it uses the whole arm in a sawing action.



Electrically operated devices, such as blenders, food processors, electric can openers and electric knives, can also be used to reduce the strain on painful joints.

EATING AND DRINKING

Standard cutlery can be made easier to use by enlarging the handle with slip-on foam tubing. Cutlery is also available with ready made built-up handles.



Angled knives enable a stronger grip and rocker knives enable the user to cut food using only one hand.

People with extremely limited grasp and dexterity can use a simple orthosis like universal cuff. This cuff is secured around the hand, and the cutlery is inserted into a pocket held in the palm of the hand.



Spoons and forks with angled or bendable shafts can assist people with limited movement to manipulate food into their mouth.

A clip-on plate guard or plate with lips can be useful in preventing food spilling off the plate when people have reduced control due to limited movement and pain.

Two handle mugs and cups are available in a variety of styles to suit people with limited thumb, finger and wrist movement. Light weight cups may also reduce the strain on these joints.

NEED TO KNOW MORE?

Telephone, fax or e-mail your enquiry to obtain further information from one of the therapists about products. Alternatively, you can make an appointment to trial the equipment at our display centres or through our outreach service. Please phone LifeTec Queensland for further details.

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