

# Independent Living Assistance

## Arthritis management



### About arthritis

Arthritis is a very common condition that causes:

- fatigue
- pain
- swelling
- decreased motion
- stiffness in one or more joints.

There are many types of Arthritis. It can affect many joints within the body, however it commonly affects a person's:

- knees and hips
- neck and back
- feet
- hands.

The word 'arthritis' literally means 'inflammation of the joint'.

### Protecting your joints

Pain can be your body warning you that have too much stress on joints.

You may need to stop what you are doing, rest more often or change the activity (for example, allow dishes to air dry rather than wiping them).

It is best to use larger, stronger body joints and muscles when you can. For example, you might use both hands to carry a shopping bag or carry it on your forearm.

### Household tasks

- Utensils with a built-up handle may be easier to grasp (for example specifically designed vegetable peelers, cutlery, cooking spatulas). Tubular foam or lightweight slip-on handles can be added to a range of items to build-up the handle (such as toothbrush or hairbrush).
- Specific kettles with an inbuilt pivoted frame allow the kettle to be tipped without having to lift it. There are also frames that fit the kettle you own that allow the same action.

- You might also like to try bringing a small bottle/jug of water to the kettle for filling, rather than carrying a full kettle back from the sink.
- Jar openers, bottle openers and can openers, including ring-pull can openers are designed to use larger muscles and put less stress on smaller joints. Electric or battery-operated jar and can openers are also available.
- Ergonomic knives with angled handles are useful when cutting and slicing.
- Tap turners, silicone grips and lever-style taps can provide better grip and leverage.
- Door grippers or non-slip matting may help with grasping and turning round door knobs.
- A 'pick-up reacher' is a long-handled stick with a claw at the end that enables you to pick up lightweight objects from the floor or unreachable heights.
- Plastic plug pullers help pull electric plugs out of their close-fitting socket.
- Trolleys such as a tray mobile can make moving heavy objects within the house easier.
- Key turners give better grip leverage on keys.
- Lightweight plastic, rubber and foam grips for pens and pencils aid grasp.
- Spring-action scissors require less pressure and less involvement of the thumb to operate.

### Dressing

- Clothing and shoes that pull on without buttons, zips or laces are generally easier to manage.
- Use bras without fastenings.
- Button hooks and zip pullers are often useful.

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- A dressing stick can help you pull up underwear or pants, or help you remove them over your feet from a seated position.
- Sock and stocking aids help you reach the sock or stocking to the foot and then pull it up.
- Slippers that open-up flat make it easier to place your foot in. They close with hook-and-loop tape fastenings and are available with non-slip rubber soles.
- A long-handled shoe horn may help you put on your shoes.

### Personal care

- Pill splitters, pill crushers and medicine organisers help you to get the right dose at the right time.
- An angled, long-handled brush, washing sponge or bottom-wiper can help with personal hygiene tasks, particularly if you have restricted neck or shoulder movement.

### Recreation

- Lightweight, long-handled and adapted garden tools are available.
- A card holder will allow you to look at your playing cards and select without having to hold the cards in your hand.
- Book holders support a book, whilst you are in a chair or bed. Tablets or iPads may be lighter to hold than a book. The texts for a wide range of books can be downloaded from the Internet.

### Useful resources

The Hospital Research Foundation Group - Arthritis has a wide range of information sheets available about living with arthritis and how to manage symptoms.

You can contact this organisation at:

111A Welland Ave, Welland SA 5007

Tel: (08) 8379 5711 or Infoline 1800 011 041

Email: [contactus@fightingarthritis.org.au](mailto:contactus@fightingarthritis.org.au)

Website: <https://fightingarthritis.org.au/>

Through **My Aged Care** it is possible for older people to access Australian Government-subsidised services including a home assessment by an occupational therapist, home modifications and assistive technology. For further information and to check eligibility, call 1800 200 422 or visit [www.myagedcare.gov.au/](http://www.myagedcare.gov.au/).

**Catalyst Foundation** (including Seniors Information Service) can help you to access useful resources and to locate equipment suppliers. Tel (08) 8168 8776 or email [information@catalystfoundation.com.au](mailto:information@catalystfoundation.com.au).

*The information contained here is general in nature and is not intended as health advice.*

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