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Joint protection

***Information for
patients and carers***

**Occupational Therapy Department
Aberdeen Royal Infirmary**

Introduction

This booklet has been compiled by the Occupational Therapy Department to help people with arthritis.

Outlined in this booklet are techniques that take the stress and strain out of everyday tasks. These techniques will help to prevent damage to your joints.

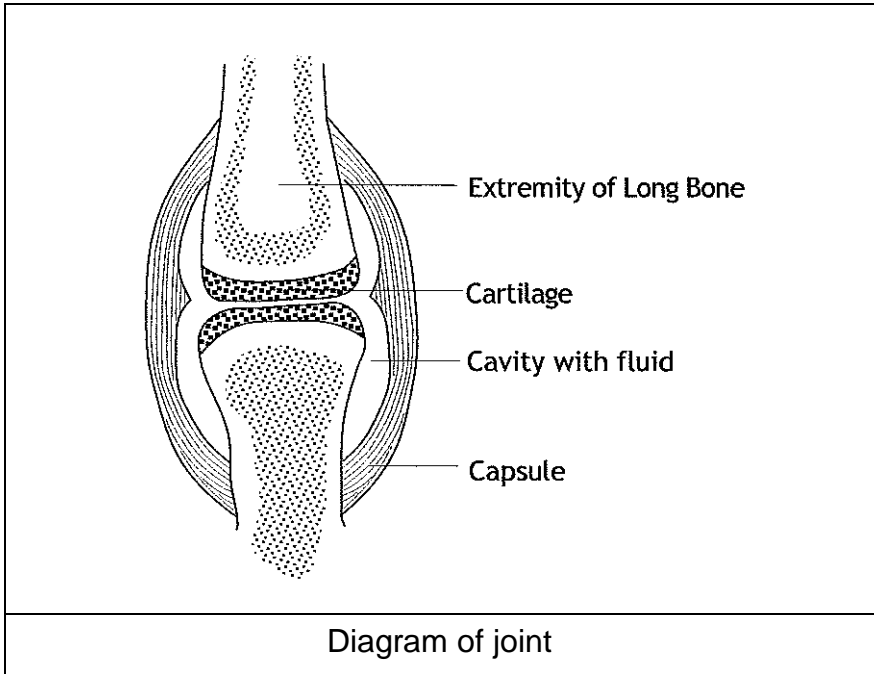
It is important to adopt these protection techniques into your lifestyle **now**. This will help to minimise the possibility of joint deformity in later life.

We hope you find the booklet useful.

Why is joint protection important?

Joint protection aims to:

- Reduce strain on your joints.
- Reduce pain.
- Prevent damage and deformity.



How can I protect my joints?

1. Respect pain.

- Pain is there for a reason and should be respected.
- Rest your joints more when they are swollen, red and painful.

2. Use larger, stronger joints. Spread a load over several joints.

For example:

- Carry bag over your shoulder rather than using your fingers.
- Avoid carrying by using a trolley.
- Use palms/forearms to lift items.
- Ask friends and family to help.
- Use hips/elbows to open doors.
- Use both hands to lift/carry items.
- Ensure load is held close to the body.

3. Use each joint in its most stable position.

- Position yourself directly in front of an activity, such as work surface, supermarket trolley.
- Avoid over-reaching and twisting.

4. Avoid holding joints / muscles in one position for long periods.

- Place book on bookstand rather than holding it.
- Put pen/cutlery down every so often.
- During an activity, stop every 10 to 15 minutes and stretch.

5. Avoid positions likely to strain joints.

- Avoid carrying heavy loads with fingers.
- Avoid gripping items too tightly.
- Avoid leaning on hands/knuckles.
- Avoid twisting of fingers.
- Use equipment to help avoid these positions (such as electric items and gadgets).

6. Avoid repetitive, jarring movements.

7. Never begin an activity that you cannot stop immediately if it becomes too much for you.

- Continuing with an activity is likely to damage the joints if they are painful.
- Break activities down so they are manageable, for example, spread housework out over whole week.
- Know your limits.

- 8. Keep muscles strong and maintain good movements in the joints.**
 - Do not force a joint beyond its limit.
 - Continue with physiotherapy exercises and personal fitness regime.
 - Maintain a good posture at rest and during activity.

- 9. Discuss equipment and splints with your Occupational Therapist.**

Useful contacts

Versus Arthritis

Copeman House

St Mary's Court

St Mary's Gate

Chesterfield

S41 7DT



0300 790 0400



versusarthritis.org



enquiries@versusarthritis.org




Helpline 0800 5200 520

Arthur's Place

An online magazine and social network for young adults with arthritis.

 www.arthursplace.co.uk

National Rheumatoid Arthritis Society (NRAS)

 Helpline: **0800 298 7650**

 www.NRAS.org.uk


 helpline@nras.org.uk

Jobcentre Plus

 **0800 169 0190**

healthpoint

Information points for advice about health related issues including healthy eating, stopping smoking, returning to work and support groups. Available throughout Grampian and Moray.

 **08085 20 20 30 (Free helpline)**

**This leaflet is also available in large print.
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Ask for leaflet 0236.**

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