

Hand Osteoarthritis - Protecting Your Hands

Protecting the joints in your hands is important to:

- Reduce joint stress and pain
- Prevent deformity
- Make your daily activities easier

Use the following strategies **at ALL times**, not just when your hands hurt:

1. Use your bigger joints to complete a task

- Carry your handbag with your shoulder or forearm. Carry only what you need.
- Push or pull items rather than carry them, e.g. use a wheeled cart for groceries
- Carry large or heavy items with two hands. Hug the item close to your body.
- Close drawers/doors with your hip or choose automatic doors when possible
- Push up from a chair using the palm of your hand, not your fingers. Choose higher chairs or use a firm cushion on your chair.



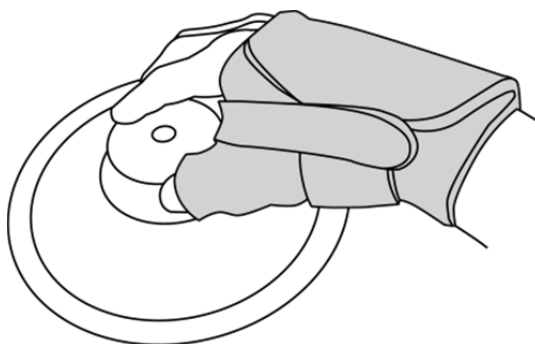
2. Plan ahead

- Vary tasks and change your hand position often. Take breaks every 20-30 minutes.
- Spread heavier tasks throughout the week
- Rest your hands before they are tired or sore
- Organize your workspace to ensure hands and wrists are in a neutral posture

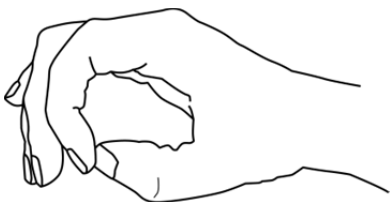



3. Use splints to protect your joints, either at rest or during activity

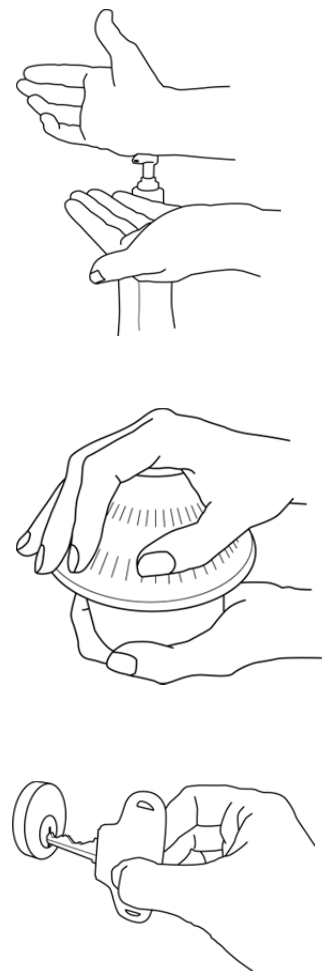
- Talk to your care team to determine if a hand or thumb splint would be helpful for you



4. Change your grip and use adapted equipment to avoid tight gripping/squeezing and force through the thumb

<p style="text-align: center;">DO: ✓</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Try to use the “O” or “C” grip with all daily activities 	<p style="text-align: center;">DO NOT: ✗</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use a pinch grip (flattening the space between your thumb and fingers) Use a lot of force through the thumb 
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Activity:	Try:
Writing, gardening	→ Buy large-handled tools or make your own handles larger with foam tubing
Cooking	→ Adapted kitchen aids e.g. finger vegetable peeler, ergonomic salad spinner
Opening jars and cans	→ Jar seal-opener, non-slip grip, electric can opener
Twisting tops, squeezing tubes	→ Products with pumps
Wringing out cloths	→ Use the heel of your hand; sponge or washing brush
Reading	→ Book holder, books on tape, e-books
Dressing	→ Button hook, zipper pull
Opening doors, turning taps	→ Lever taps and door handles
Gripping slippery items, e.g. removing credit cards from a wallet	→ Use a piece of non-slip mat, e.g. Dycem; accordion-style wallet
Pinching a key	→ Key holder
Self-care, e.g. cutting nails, washing hair, etc.	→ Adapted equipment from a pharmacy or medical supply store



** Adapted equipment can often be found at medical supply stores, department, hardware or kitchen stores

5. Follow the exercises given to you by your healthcare team