

# Joint Protection

[www.arthritis.org.nz](http://www.arthritis.org.nz)



**ARTHRITIS  
NEW ZEALAND**

**KAIPONAPONA AOTEAROA**

*Improving the lives of  
people affected by arthritis*

*Te whai kia pai ake te hunga  
kua pāngia e te kaiponapona*

# Did you know?

- Arthritis affects one in six New Zealanders over the age of 15 years
- Every day activities can place **extra stress on your joints**
- Maintaining a **healthy weight** will reduce pressure on your joints
- Try to **keep as fit** as possible

By working with your doctor, specialist, podiatrist, occupational therapist, pharmacist, physiotherapist and Arthritis New Zealand, you can find ways to protect your joints. That might sound like a lot of people, and you won't need all of them, but look on them as a team.

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## What is joint protection?

Joint protection is about using your body in different ways to reduce the amount of stress on sore joints. Research has shown that by using joint protection methods people experience reduced pain, less stiffness in the morning and fewer flare-ups.

## The principles of joint protection

### ▪ Respect pain

Pain is your body's way of protecting itself – if you feel pain during an activity STOP and rest. If you still have pain an hour after doing an activity, you have done too much. Remember to do less next time or build in short breaks. Remember pain is not a message from your body to eliminate the activity; rather it is a suggestion from your body to proceed more carefully.

### ▪ Positioning

Use each joint in the most stable positions, being conscious of your posture. Change position from one which puts strain on particular joints to one which spreads the weight evenly over several joints. A Physiotherapist or Occupational Therapist may recommend the use of splints or other aids to provide support.

### ▪ Avoiding Tiredness

Many people feel tired especially at the end of the day. This can also make your joints and muscles ache more. Living with pain caused by any kind of arthritis can make more demands on your energy. You may wish to ask us about how to sleep better.

Doing an activity  
the easiest way  
possible is best...



## Things you can do to spread your energy further

- Pace yourself.
- Plan ahead and set priorities.
- Find the best position for the job you are about to do.
- Get better organised.
- Get a good night's sleep.

### *How can I pace myself better?*

Take a break for a few minutes every half hour. Change activities regularly and swap between light and heavier jobs. For example, after vacuuming a room, do some dusting, then sit down and take a break.

When mowing the lawn, take a break before you get tired, change to a lighter job and go back to mowing later when you feel rested.

### *How can I get better organised?*

Look at how you are doing things and see if you can organise the job better.

Make sure you have all the things you need at hand before you start. Ask yourself:

- Can any part of the job be cut out or done more efficiently?
- Can you sit rather than stand to work?
- Can you slow down a bit?

Doing an activity the easiest way possible is best; this means taking an honest look at the methods, routines and habits you have developed and deciding how can you save energy.

Remember that there are many practical devices and changes that can be made to assist with daily activities. Contact us on 0800 663 463 to discuss how to manage your condition.

### *What can I do to help myself?*

Many day to day activities can place extra stress on your joints. This can lead to increased pain and fatigue and reduced stamina. Some days your health will dictate what you can and can't do. This can be frustrating. By making changes early on you can help to avoid problems becoming worse in the future.

- Look after your joints – reducing strain should help to ease aches and pains.
- Pace yourself, plan ahead, and decide on your priorities to avoid becoming so tired.
- Try to get a good night's sleep.
- Keep to your ideal weight to reduce pressure on the hips, knees and feet.
- Try to keep as fit as possible, and to build up muscle stamina through regular exercise.
- Do hand exercises most days to improve your grip.
- Chose good quality supportive shoes with shock absorbing soles and insoles.



## For more information

Talk with your healthcare team and visit our website [www.arthritis.org.nz](http://www.arthritis.org.nz) or call 0800 663463.

### *Other resources:*

- Arthritis Research UK – [www.arthritisresearchuk.org](http://www.arthritisresearchuk.org)
- NZ Rheumatology Association – [www.rheumatology.org.nz](http://www.rheumatology.org.nz)

# Where can I learn more?

[www.arthritis.org.nz](http://www.arthritis.org.nz)

## *Regional offices*

Northern (Auckland) 09 523 8900

Midland/Central (Wellington) 04 472 1427

Southern (Christchurch) 03 366 8383

## *National office*

Level 2, 166 Featherston Street

PO Box 10020, The Terrace

Wellington, 6143

Phone 04 472 1427

Fax 04 472 7066

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**Tollfree 0800 663 463**



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