

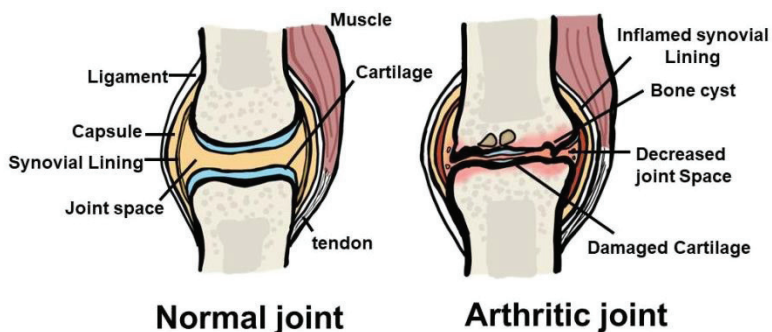
Occupational Therapy for Arthritis



WHAT IS ARTHRITIS?

When someone develops arthritis, the joint tissue becomes inflamed, producing an excessive amount of fluid, causing joint swelling and pain.

If excess fluid enlarges the joint capsule for an extended period, the ligaments surrounding the joint may be stretched and weakened. The diseased fluid inside the joint capsule may slowly erode the cartilage and eventually expose the bone to further damage. This can result in painful movements and affect the use of the hand in daily activities.





THE ROLE OF OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY

Your occupational therapist will assist you in managing the symptoms through recommendations and advice on:

- Symptom and pain management
- Recommendations of suitable rigid or soft splints
- Joint protection and activity modification

ACTIVITY MODIFICATION PRINCIPLES

Adopt the **Activity Modification Principles** to allow rest and recovery of the affected joints. Using the activity of floor mopping as an example, you are applying the Activity Modification Principles when you:

	<p>REMOVE by engaging others to complete the task</p> <p>For example: Get assistance from a family member or a robot vacuum to mop the floor</p>
	<p>REPLACE by using alternative methods or tools to complete the task</p> <p>For example: Use a bucket with wheels to push it around, instead of using finger to grip the bucket handle</p>
	<p>REDUCE the frequency, duration and compressive forces when performing tasks</p> <p>For example: Reduce the number of days that you mop the floor and wrap the mop stick with non-slip mat to cushion the grip</p>
	<p>REST by taking regular breaks in between tasks or break tasks up into different parts.</p> <p>For example: Take short rest breaks after mopping each room</p>

JOINT PROTECTION STRATEGIES

Joint Protection Strategies aim to minimise the stress placed on your hand joints, thus reducing pain and further joint damage when performing daily activities.

- **Avoid positions or actions that may lead to joint deformity**
Smaller finger joints are easily subjected to strain by repeated motions, forceful grips, and pinching actions, which can result in joint deformity. To prevent joint deformity, you are advised to keep your joints at a stable position when performing such activities.
- **Make use of larger, more stable joints or methods that off load the joints**
Such actions help to reduce strain to the finger joints and allow better load distribution.
- **Plan, organise and reduce effort**
Plan to balance rest and activity and prioritise the tasks that have to be completed. You are encouraged to maintain tools at tip-top working conditions to reduce unnecessary effort.
- **Respect pain and recognise fatigue**
Excessive joint stress can lead to joint damage. Ache and fatigue provide a good prompt to take the opportunity to rest the small joints to prevent escalation of pain and inflammation.

ASSISTIVE DEVICES

The use of assistive devices can help to protect your hand joints and maintain your independence while doing daily activities.

Here are some examples of common assistive devices:



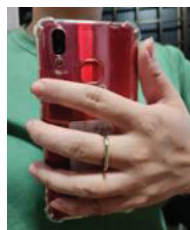
Electric Jar Opener



Build-up Grip for Pen



Can Opener



Phone Ring

Scan the QR code to find out more:

Activity Modification and Joint Protection Principles



<https://for.sg/mnnc04c>

SPLINTING/ORTHOTIC SUPPORT



Splints are supports designed to be worn when doing activities to reduce pain, and support the joint to prevent further damage. The splint can be removed for light activities that do not cause pain. Light activities help to maintain your joint motion and strength.

Finger supports	 <p>Finger Gutter</p>	 <p>Mallet Splint</p>	 <p>Oval 8 Splint</p>
Thumb supports	 <p>Push Metagrip</p>	 <p>Short Comfort Cool Brace</p>	 <p>Short Thumb Spica Splint</p>





EXERCISES

The following exercises will help to reduce stiffness and maintain the flexibility of your thumb and fingers. For each exercise, complete **10** repetitions and hold each for **10** seconds. The exercises should be done 3 times a day. Exercise within a **comfortable and pain-free range**. You can use a heat pack or soak your hand in warm water before exercising if possible.

A. Hand Exercises

 <p>Bend the middle and end joints of the fingers to form a hook fist</p>	 <p>Bend all the fingers to make a full fist</p>
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B. Thumb Exercises

 <p>Squeeze between your thumb and index finger</p>	 <p>Stretch your thumb away from your index finger</p>
 <p>Make an "O" shape with each finger tips</p>	 <p>Bend your thumb into your palm</p>

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This patient information leaflet was jointly created by Occupational Therapy from National University Hospital, Ng Teng Fong General Hospital and Alexandra Hospital.

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