Protecting Your Joints

There are things you can do to protect your joints as you go through your day. Some of these things will prevent more stress and strain to your joints. Others will keep joint problems from getting worse.

General Ideas to Try

- Use your strongest and largest joints instead of your smaller ones. For example, open a door using your shoulder and elbow to pull rather than your fingers and wrist.

- Lift items by scooping them up with both hands instead of trying to lift with only a few fingers on one hand.

- Use your whole body to move things. Slide heavy pots across the counter or lean against drawers to close them. Be sure you get help if you need to move anything heavy.

- Give your joints time to rest and avoid staying in the same position for long periods of time. This helps keep your muscles from tiring so they can better support your joints. For example, you would be sitting for a while and then standing, or not vacuuming the whole room at once but taking a break to rest before finishing.

- Avoid positions that bend the joints for long periods. For example, don't sit while leaning on bent elbows. If you can, try to lie on your front for 15 to 30 minutes a day with your arms and legs stretched out so the joints are not bent.
• Stop what you are doing right away if your joints feel strained or if you are feeling tired.

• Respect pain. If you have pain for more than a couple hours after you do something, you may need to change the way you do that activity the next time.

• Be sure to take rest breaks. Stop before you get tired. Save your energy so you can move throughout the day.

Keep in mind that adaptive equipment or electrical appliances may reduce joint strain. Reaching devices and safety grab bars for your shower, tub or toilets work well for some people. Electric can openers, blenders, mixers and toothbrushes can lessen stress on your fingers and wrists.

Some people find larger handles on pans or utensils helpful. Carts on wheels can come in handy in your kitchen, bathroom or eating spaces to move things instead of lifting them.

Your therapist or doctor may have some other ideas that may work for you. Talk with them if there is something you need help with so you don't strain your joints.

Talk to your doctor or others on your health care team if you have questions. You may request more written information from the Library for Health Information at (614) 293-3707 or email: health-info@osu.edu.