

# JOINT PROTECTION

## GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF JOINT PROTECTION

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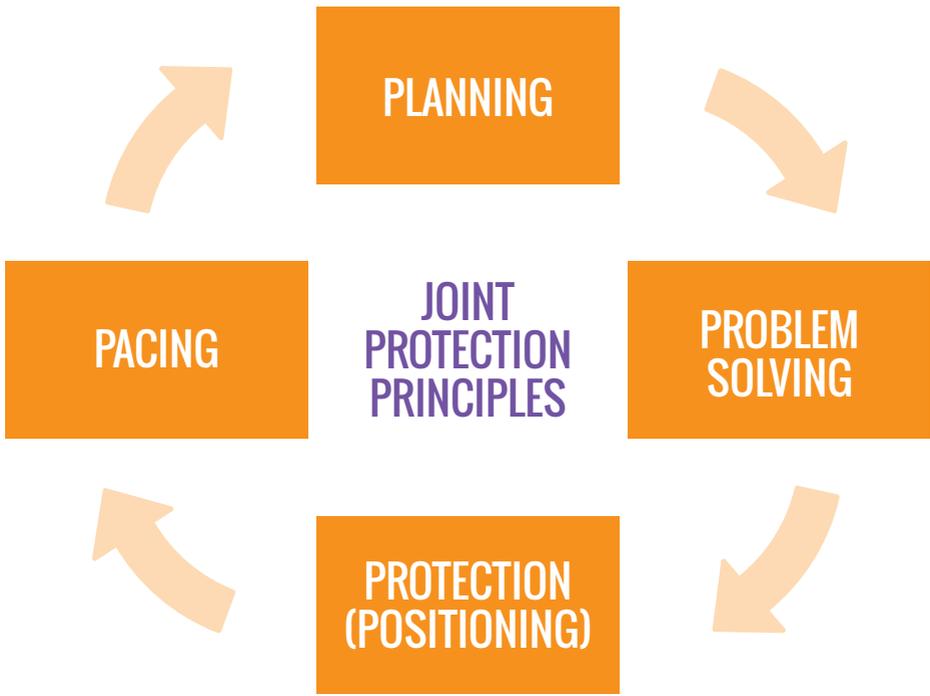
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**MAKING A  
DIFFERENCE  
FOR YOU,  
WITH YOU**

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## WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS FROM JOINT PROTECTION, PACING AND PLANNING?

- **Promotes locus of control** – you are in control of symptoms rather than symptoms deciding what you can achieve in a day.
- **Providing strategies to engage in everyday activities** - which can help to reduce flare ups and long term joint / tissue damage, thus can increase our overall wellbeing.

# 1. BENEFITS OF PACING AND PLANNING

Through planning when / what activities we complete and pacing ourselves through these effectively, we can then increase time spent doing the things we want to do and can help to maintain or improve our stamina levels. This can help provide a sense of empowerment as we are able to do more with less pain, which can also then help improve our emotional wellbeing.

## PACING

Pacing is spreading out both your energy and your stamina, alongside paying attention to your pain tolerance to enable you to undertake tasks during the day.

You are not aiming to work until the point of pain but stop before your activity causes increased pain.

Pacing takes time to implement whilst you work out your individual baseline abilities and tolerance levels. For example:

- Take breaks appropriately and break your activities down into more manageable amounts of time.

- The amount of time you spend on each activity varies greatly from person to person.

## POSITIONING

Positioning in joint protection involves thinking about how you use your hands in your tasks, and how you hold the items you are using. We are aiming to reduce the load going through individual joints and avoiding positions that give you pain.

For example

- With heavier and bulky or awkward items try to use 2 hands as this spreads the load.
- Carry a plate with both hands under the plate instead of grasping the plate between your thumb and index / middle fingers.

## 2. PLANNING



In order to pace effectively it is necessary to do some planning.

Here are some tips when planning your activities:

- Ask for help or delegate tasks where possible.
- Have gadgets / tools accessible to you when you need them.
- Use splints if provided by your hand therapist.
- Complete activities in stages.
- Do lighter activities at times when you have more pain.
- Prioritise your jobs so you can space out your more challenging tasks during the day.
- what needs completing today and what can wait until tomorrow / later that week etc.

## **BENEFITS OF PACING AND PLANNING:**

Through planning when / what activities we complete and pacing ourselves through these effectively, we can then increase time spent doing the things we want to do. Thus we can feel empowered as we are able to do more through symptom management, maintain our stamina levels and potentially improve our emotional wellbeing.

### 3. PROBLEM SOLVING AND PROTECTION

through the use of positioning and gadgets

Problem solving simply means taking the time to look at the activities causing you difficulties and asking yourself:

- Can I do this differently?
- Can I adapt it?
- Can someone else help or complete it for me?

Some examples of joint protection being implemented are:

- Use non slip materials - having a better grip on items can make the task easier
- Rest / prop up objects instead of holding for prolonged periods e.g. book stands and mobile / tablet holder
- Pad or replace handles - using wider non slip handles helps to reduce the work your hands are doing.
- Create stability – for example using non slip material under a mixing bowl which reduces the work your hands are doing.

- Reduce the weight of items - less weight equals less work and less strain.
- Use leverage to manipulate items - this reduces the effort you have to put into a task i.e an assistive device that uses leverage to open a ring pull.

## GADGETS

Joint protection involves using techniques and assistive technology (aids and equipment) with the aim of minimising the stress and force placed on joints, to help reduce pain and to help protect against further joint damage or deformity.

The number of gadgets available to help with everyday tasks can be overwhelming.

You may therefore find it helpful to search 'arthritis', followed by what you require help with, into an online search engine, and then click on images.

For example, if 'arthritis kitchen aids' is searched, plenty of options will be available to you. Please self-assess how relevant and useful these will be before purchasing, and ensure the website is safe before using.

Before purchasing gadgets, consider:

- What am I hoping to achieve?
- Are there any risks?
- Is there any evidence? (look at product reviews)
- Cost effectiveness?
- Source?

- Look for simpler gadgets; if it has a lot of steps to use it, it may be making the task more complicated and you are less likely to use it

## EXAMPLES OF USEFUL GADGETS:

**Please note this is not an extensive list, only examples and suggestions of gadgets currently available.**

Use labour saving methods and gadgets wherever possible.

Electrical items such as:

- microwave cookers
- slow cookers
- carving knives
- can openers
- toothbrushes
- tumble dryers and dishwashers

may help to reduce the amount of stress on the joints.

These are all items that you may consider purchasing in the future. However, when purchasing any items, consider the ease of operation, weight and cleaning.



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**Outstanding** ★



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