

Article for Release

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Daily Tips for Women With Arthritis

In the U.S. alone, 2.1 million people, or 1% of the population have Rheumatoid Arthritis (according to the Arthritis Foundation). It can affect anyone including children. 70% of the people with Rheumatoid Arthritis are women. Women are 2-3 times more likely to get Rheumatoid Arthritis than men. In 2005, the number of Americans with arthritis (as reported by the Arthritis Foundation) is 66million (nearly 1 in 3 adults).

Energy conservation and joint protection techniques are two vital concepts that anyone with arthritis should understand and practice daily. The purpose of these techniques is to accomplish your daily activities at an optimum level with minimum pain by reducing stress and inflammation in the joints. Remember, considering your joints, the way you do a job is more important than the job you do. When the techniques are used correctly, performing the task is less painful and joint inflammation is less noticeable, depending upon the activity and stress to the joint. It is important that an individual distinguish between arthritis discomfort resulting from excessive stress to a joint versus that of joint pain from inactivity.

The specific energy conservation techniques are based on four principles:

1. Set priorities
2. Plan daily work schedules
3. Set up proper work conditions
4. Simplify the work task

It is important to set priorities in your daily activities so that you become aware of activities that are not essential to one's life style. For example: some short cuts include using permanent press materials to eliminate ironing, soaking dishes rather than scrubbing, and the use of casserole dishes for cooking and serving. Individuals should determine what is most necessary by asking why an activity is essential, what amount of energy is required and what the consequences would be if that task is left undone. Plan the week's activities so that heavy work can be distributed over several days. For example; spread the laundry throughout the week. The day's activities should be carefully planned to incorporate periods of rest between periods of work and to alternate active jobs with quiet ones. The tasks should be prioritized so that those that must be done are tackled first!

Supplies and equipment should be stored where first used and within easy reach. Duplicate sets of equipment in different locations are useful at times. For example,

store vacuums, mops and brooms on both floors of a two-story house. Arrange work areas so that they promote good posture and body mechanics. Store frequently used supplies at waist level, because bending stooping and reaching require excessive energy. It is also important to schedule you daily rest to avoid fatigue, which leads to poor body mechanics.

Joint protection is a crucial concept to be incorporated into daily activities. The over-use and abuse of diseased joints may lead to deterioration of one's ability to function independently. The principles of joint protection are 1) Exercise for muscle strength and joint motion. 2) Avoid tight pinching and gripping. 3) Avoid resting your chin on your knuckles. 4) Avoid maintaining the same position for long periods of time. 5) Use proper lifting techniques. 6) Use strongest and largest joints to do a task. 7) Plan and organize to conserve energy. 8) Respect pain and recognize fatigue. 9) Prioritize all activities. 10) Plan frequent rest periods. 11) Follow the medical program recommended by your doctor.

Energy conservation and joint protection are very beneficial in the daily activities of individuals with arthritis. However the key to learning any new technique is to use it each day.

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