

Joint Protection for the Shoulders

OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY DEPARTMENT

General Aims of Joint Protection

At Rest

- Support the joint in a comfortable and well aligned position

During Activity

- Find a method of performing an activity that does not cause pain
- Find a technique that does not strain the joint

Joint Protection Principles

Avoid Static Positions

Avoid holding your arms in one position for prolonged periods of time, particularly in a raised position.

Avoid Repetitive Movements

Particularly avoid activities requiring abrupt back and forth movements. Use long sweeping, circular motions in activities such as washing car, washing windows, dusting. If you must do repetitive activities, make sure and take scheduled breaks.

Avoid weight bearing through the arms

Example

Getting on and off chair
Getting in and out of tub
Getting on and off the toilet

Aids

Raised cushions, chair blocks
Bath bench/stool, bath lift, shower instead
Raised Toilet Seat, Use handicapped toilets in public

Respect Pain

Time and/or effort spent on an activity should be reduced if pain occurs and lasts for more than one hour after the activity has been discontinued. Avoid non-essential activities that aggravate pain.

Specific Activities - Energy Conservation and Joint Protection Techniques

- Dressing** Avoid tight turtle necks and pullovers
Wear loose fitting clothing
Dress the most painful arm first, undress the most painful arm last
Front closing shirts, dresses, bras
- Hygiene** Use assistive aids such as long handled comb, long handled brush
Support the arm with the sore shoulder when combing hair, shaving, makeup etc
- Work** Plan your storage and work areas so that the most frequently used items are in close proximity and at convenient heights - between hip and shoulder height
Avoid having to reach - heavy or frequently used items should not be on high shelves
If you are working on something that is high up, put yourself closer to the work
 (eg. Use a step stool/ladder or long handled devices to extend your reach).
- Carrying Objects** Avoid carrying heavy objects if at all possible
Use trolley on wheels
Use light weight equipment (eg. Avoid cast iron frying pans)
Carry objects close to the body, or use pockets and fanny packs
Slide objects along counter as opposed to lifting.
- Sleep** Try to avoid sleeping on your side - three quarter lying with a pillow behind you may be a useful compromise if you are not comfortable on your back.
If the shoulder you are not lying on is painful at night when on your side, try supporting that arm on a pillow.
A 2 " thickness of egg crate foam or memory foam on top of the mattress may help accommodate painful, bony parts at the shoulder.

Recreation

- Some examples of activities to avoid are:
- racquet sports
 - rowing
 - swimming butterfly stroke