

New York AgrAbility Project

Tip Sheet

Promoting Success in Agriculture for People with Disabilities and Their Families

ENERGY CONSERVATION & JOINT PROTECTION

Energy conservation and joint protection techniques are suggested for persons with rheumatoid arthritis, osteoarthritis, or any other joint-compromising disorder.

HERE ARE SOME TIPS TO HELP PREVENT PAIN AND JOINT DEFORMITY:

- Respect **PAIN** as a signal to **STOP** the activity.
- Make a **SCHEDULE** of daily activities. Write down when **PAIN** and **FATIGUE** occur and schedule in **REST BREAKS** as needed.
- Avoid **POSITIONS OF DEFORMITY** and **FORCES** in their direction. Finger motions should be in the direction of the thumb whenever possible. When getting up from a chair or holding a magazine, use the palms of the hands rather than the knuckles.
- Use the **LARGEST** and **STRONGEST** joints available for a job. Save weaker joints for the specific jobs that only they can handle. For example, carry bags on the shoulder instead of at the elbow, wrist, or fingers.
- Avoid staying in **ONE POSITION** for a **LONG PERIOD OF TIME**. Don't give your joints the chance to become stiff. When writing or doing handwork, release your grip every 10 to 15 minutes. On long car trips, get out of the car, stretch and move around at least every hour. While watching television get up and move around every 30 minutes.
- Use a **CART** to carry heavy items. If no cart is available, it is better to take several trips to get a job done than to overload and take one trip.
- **SLIDE** or **PUSH** items whenever possible.
- Avoid making a **TIGHT FIST** or **PINCHING** objects tightly. Instead, use a grasp that places your **KNUCKLES PARALLEL** to the handle of the tool or utensil being used.
- **DO NOT** start an activity that cannot be **STOPPED IMMEDIATELY** if pain or fatigue should occur.

A portion of the information is shared from: Mayo Clinic (February, 2004). *Arthritis: Protect your joints to prevent pain.*