

New York AgrAbility Project

Tip Sheet

Promoting Success in Agriculture for People with Disabilities and Their Families

Occupational Therapy

Protecting Your Joints during Everyday Activities

- **Self Care Tasks**

Holding Toothbrush, Combs, Razors

Place items parallel to the knuckles.

This method may require you to change hands to comb, brush or shave both sides comfortably.

Build up handles if you can not get your fingers straight.

Use an electric toothbrush or razor.

Using Toothpaste

Place tube slightly over edge of counter or sink. Hold brush under tube opening and press paste out with palm.

Avoid squeezing with finger tips.

Wringing Out Wash Cloths

Press cloth between palms or between sink and palm.

Never wring out with a clenched fist.

Dressing

Replace buttons with velcro, or use a buttonhook.

Wear shoes with Velcro closures.

Use a long handled shoe horn.

Build up zipperheads and attach rings.

Sew pull loops to the top of socks.

Use a back scratcher, kitchen tongs or coat hanger to extend reach.

Bathing

Wash with a bath mitt and long handled sponge.

Sit while bathing.

Built up faucet handles so they can be controlled with the palm.

Install grab bars in the tub/shower.



Tasks that involve turning

Door knobs, lamp switches, TV knobs
Turn clockwise with the right hand
Turn counter-clockwise with the left hand

Eating

Build up utensils with foam
Hold knife in the palm, with the blade extending from the pinky side
Place rubber bands around cups and glasses for easier grasp

• Kitchen and Homemaking Activities

Opening Drawers Cabinets Refrigerators

Slide your fingers through handles so the force used in opening is spread through the palm.
On knob-type openings keep fingers straight and spread the force through several fingers.
Try to avoid opening cabinets and drawers with your fingertips.
Attach a loop of ribbon to slip over the hand then pull open using strength in wrist or forearm

Closing Drawers, Cabinets, Refrigerators

Close cabinets using the palm of the hand with fingers straight.
Or close with little finger against the drawer.
Never use your fingertips or thumb and index finger to close cabinets

Removing Cans, Boxes From Shelves

Pull object from shelf with palm of one hand and slide into palm of other hand
If this is not possible, pick object off shelf with both hands.
Place objects back onto shelf using both hands.
Store heavy items on center cabinet shelves, light objects on high or low shelves

Lifting Pans

Keep fingers straight as possible
Support pan under handle and on the side
Using both hands to distribute the weight and minimize stress on the joints



Opening cans, jars

Alternating hands to open and close jars prevents stress in the direction of the little finger
Use the palm of your right hand to open jars, use left hand to close jars
Non slip type material provides a better contact surface between the jar and hand or the jar and table

Cutting And Chopping

Position knives parallel to knuckles and keep fingers as straight as possible.
Pull the knife thru the meat and towards the body
For chopping stabilize front of knife with palm of one hands hold handle with other hand and chop using an up-down motion.

Stirring And Mixing

Hold spoon keeping fingers as straight as possible.
Stir in the direction of the thumb
Build up handles of utensils if you are unable to keep your fingers straight

Faucets

Turn faucets on and off using the palm, keep fingers straight

Picking Up And Washing Dishes

Pick up plates, bowls at the sides keeping fingers straight
Use palm pressure to hold and lift items.
When washing plates, counters or tables keep fingers straight over cloth or sponges, wash in direction of thumb.

Carrying Groceries

Carry groceries and other bundles with your forearms.
Wrists and fingers should be free and relaxed
A typical hand grip may be necessary when lifting packages from a car trunk or floor but shift the package into your forearms as quickly as possible



Bed Making

Make one side of the bed before moving on to the other side.
Smooth sheets with the little finger side of hand and brush out and away from the body

Dusting

Press on dust cloth with fingers straight
Dust in direction of thumb

Vacuuming, Sweeping

Cradle the broom, dust mop or vacuum handle with the left hand
Lightly grasp the handle with the right hand. Build up the handle at this point if necessary.
Use shoulder and elbow movements to do the work.

Cleaning Sinks, Tubs

Keep fingers straight and press down on rag or sponges
Scrub in direction of thumb
A long handled sponge is recommended for cleaning the tub.
To wring water out of sponge press between your palm and the sink

Ironing

Hold the handle lightly or build up the handle to prevent making a tight fist
Slide the iron and avoid picking it up and down
Sit to iron if possible
Buy clothes that don't need ironing

Laundry

Remove clothes from the dryer with a reacher
Use clothespins that push on instead of the kind you have to pinch



• Leisure Time Activities

Gardening

Use lightweight long-handled garden tools.
Raised garden boxes eliminate the need to bend or kneel.
Use a sprinkler system rather than carrying a water can or holding a hose.
Time limit 30-60 minutes.

Hiking/Walking

Wear sturdy shoes.
Avoid long hikes, hilly areas and rough terrain.
Use a moderate paces rest, when necessary, stop before fatigued
Time limit as tolerated

Bicycling

Use lightweight, multi-speed bike
Try to maintain good posture
Grip the handles as loosely as possible
Time limit as tolerated.

Golf

Use a motorized golf cart when possible
Push your golf bag or get a caddy to carry them
Do not carry your clubs on your shoulder.
Play the number of holes within walking tolerance,
Time limit as tolerated.

Fishing

Use a lightweight rod
Change position often from sitting to standing
Prop pole rather than holding it for a long time.
Time limit as tolerated.



Swimming

- Excellent exercise
- Swim leisurely
- Time limit as tolerated.

Reading

- Use a book stand for heavier books
- Lay newspapers/magazines on a table.
- Avoid holding in your hand for long periods.
- Time limit as tolerated

Writing

- Build up pens/pencils
- Flair Tip pens require less pressure to make a mark
- Sit at desk/table in a comfortable chair.
- Writing requires a sustained grip and is not recommended for long periods.
- Time limit 10-15 minutes.

Painting/Sketching

- Sit to work.
- Build up handles of brushes, pencils.
- Avoid long periods of holding
- Time limit -- 15-30 minutes

Needlework

- Needlework maintains fingers in a fixed position for a prolonged period and is not recommended
- Build up handles or use large needles whenever possible
- Time limit -- 10-15 minutes.



Sewing

Use electric machine and electric scissors
Sit on a sturdy chair with back support.,
Try to cut down on the amount and period of time spent in pinning.
Time limit -- 1 hour

Music

Piano playing puts stress on the fingers and is not recommended
Organ requires lighter touch than piano
Guitar not recommended (due to strumming towards little finger and use of a stressful pinch in order to play the chord)
Listening to music is recommended
Time limit for playing instruments -- 15 minutes

Cards

Use a good chair with back support.
A card holder is recommended to avoid sustained holding of the cards
Time limit -- as tolerated.

Movie/TV

Use good sitting posture
Walk around during intermission/commercials
Time limit -- several hours.

Home Entertaining

Avoid last minute rush by planning or making a schedule ahead
If serving a meal consider a buffet with a one-dish meal such as a casserole.
Pot-Luck can save you energy in preparation and clean-up
Use disposable plates, glasses, napkins.

A portion of the information shared from: <http://www.geocities.com/Heartland/Prairie/5309/arth7.html>.