

# 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>.