

## **Adapt Your Home for Arthritis**

Osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis can make it more difficult to perform everyday tasks. Although you may find fiddly tasks such as turning stove dials more tricky, arthritis needn't stop you from living a normal life. Use these tips to adapt your home and help you enjoy each day.

There are lots of simple labour-saving measures you can take and a host of easily-available aids and gadgets. Here we describe just a few of them; for more detailed, tailor-made advice, consult an occupational therapist.

You should be able to find all of these aids in any good department store. The internet is another great place to shop for gadgets. Most of the measures shown below are simple and inexpensive, but if you need to make extensive changes to your home you may be eligible for a grant to help with the costs. A number of charities and other organizations also offer free products and services. Ask your social services department or occupational therapist for more details.

### **Adapting Your Home**

- A basket on the inside of the mail slot means you don't need to bend to pick up letters.
- Large handles attached to door keys makes them much more manageable.
- Levers on door handles and special grips to door knobs make them easier to turn.
- Special plugs with handles are much easier to plug in and pull out; alternatively, special grips can be fitted to regular plugs.
- Touch or rocker-type light switches make house lights easier to use.
- A hands-free phone avoids the need to hold the receiver for long periods.

### **In the Living Room**

- Adding cushions to a chair seat may make standing up easier.
- Special blocks are available that can be placed under chair legs to raise the chair.
- Riser-recliner chairs let you sit back in comfort and tilt to bring you to a standing position. You can adapt regular chairs using portable lifting cushions.
- A reacher stick helps you to pick things up without needing to stand up or bend over.

### **In the Kitchen**

- Placing frequently-used items in easily accessible cupboards and drawers reduces bending and stretching.
- Knob turners give more leverage to turn small or fiddly knobs.
- Lever taps on the kitchen sink are easier to use than regular taps; alternatively, special turners can be attached to the taps.
- Special aids are available to help open jars and bottles and remove ring pulls.

- A trolley to move things around helps avoid the need to carry heavy pots and plates.

### **Cooking and Eating**

- Kitchen utensils with chunky or moulded handles are much easier on stiff fingers; rocker knives help with cutting and chopping.
- Cutlery is available with large or curved handles; lightweight crockery and cups with large handles can be held more safely.
- Light pots with two handles are easier to lift without dropping or spilling the contents.
- Spike boards can be used to hold vegetables still while cutting them.

### **In the Bathroom**

- Lever taps can be fitted to the sink.
- Long-handled sponges and hairbrushes help those with stiff arms and shoulders.
- A thick terry cloth bathrobe helps you to dry off after a bath or shower.
- A grab-rail next to the toilet and the bath makes it easier to manoeuvre.
- Walk-in baths are very helpful for those who cannot climb in and out of the bath, although installation can be expensive; another option is a powered lift in the bath.

### **In the Study**

- Wrist splints or a wrist rest in front of the keyboard are easier on your wrists.
- Frequent breaks reduce the strain placed on your hand and wrist joints.
- If your hands are severely affected, voice-activated software can make using the computer much easier and less painful.

### **In the Car**

- A panoramic rear-view mirror and blind-spot mirrors give a better view if you have a stiff neck.
- A swivelling seat can help you get in and out of the car.
- Seat-belt fasteners and other adaptations are available to make fastening and wearing belts more comfortable.
- If you are getting a new car, consider buying one with power steering and an automatic transmission.

*Adapted From Healty Bones, Muscles & Joints*

Courtesy: [http://www.readersdigest.ca/health/cms/xcms/adapt-your-home-for-arthritis\\_1126\\_a.html](http://www.readersdigest.ca/health/cms/xcms/adapt-your-home-for-arthritis_1126_a.html)