

Osteoarthritis - Protecting Your Shoulders

The safest position for your shoulders is:

- Upper arms relaxed by your sides
- Shoulder blades back & down
- Chin tucked with your head balanced over your body

Important points to remember:

- Respect pain. Pain is your body telling you that you need to take a break, find a new way of doing the activity, or avoid it all together.
- Avoid holding your arms in a raised position away from your body for prolonged periods of time.
- Avoid repetitive arm movements, especially back and forth. I.e. Scrubbing the floor, brushing teeth etc.
- Avoid weight-bearing through your arms; use a high firm chair, or a raised toilet seat, so that you don't need to push up through your arms to stand.

Be aware of your shoulder position in all daily activities:

1. Sleeping

- Avoid lying on the painful shoulder or with that arm tucked under a pillow
 - If you can't tolerate lying on your back, use a pillow under one side of your back for "3/4" lying
- When lying on your back or other side, support your painful arm on a pillow



2. Household activities

- Use a step stool or long-handled reacher to avoid reaching above shoulder height
- Use light-weight tools i.e. light vacuum, aluminum frying pan instead of cast iron etc.
- Crouch or stoop before reaching to pick up an item from the floor
- Avoid twisting and awkward positions, such as reaching for objects in the back seat of a car from the front seat.
- Store regularly used items between thigh and shoulder height
 - Store heavy items around waist height
 - Carry heavy items close to your body, supporting the weight against your body
 - Use a wheeled cart or office chair to move heavy items



3. Dressing

- Dress the painful arm first. Undress the better arm first.
- Wear loose-fitting clothing
- Wear front-closing shirts and bras or do the bra up in the front and then twist it around

4. Computer & desk set-up

- Move the phone to your better side to avoid reaching with the painful arm
 - Avoid holding the phone between your neck and shoulder
 - If you must use the phone for prolonged periods, consider a hands-free head set
- Keep regularly used items within easy reach
- Raise the computer monitor to a height where your eyes line up with the top 1/3 of the screen
- Adjust your chair and/or keyboard tray so that you can type and mouse with your elbows bent to about 90° and your upper arms relaxed by your sides
- Take frequent breaks to stretch and “reset” your posture
 - Bring your shoulder blades down and back as if they are tucked in pockets on your back
 - Chin tucked; an imaginary string is pulling you straight up from the top of your head
 - Use your chair armrests to support your arms when you take a break from typing



5. Other ideas

| Activity: | Try: |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Brushing hair | → Buy a long-handled brush or comb |
| Drying hair | → Use a hook to hang the blow-dryer or get a blow-dryer stand so that you don't have to hold it constantly |
| Applying make-up, shaving etc. | → Use your “good” arm to support the weight of the sore arm |
| Brushing teeth | → Use an electric toothbrush to avoid repetitive back & forth motion |
| Getting out of bed | → Use your abdominal muscles to sit up, instead of pushing up with your arms |
| Driving | → Keep your hands below the "3 o'clock" and "9 o'clock" positions on the steering wheel when driving |
| Bathing | → Use a long-handled sponge to reach your back |

