

Joint Protection for the Legs (Hips, Knees, Ankles, and Feet)

OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY DEPARTMENT

Joint Protection: finding ways of decreasing pain while doing daily activities.

Plan ahead:

- Take small breaks/rests BEFORE you get tired and sore.
- Try using a timer to remind you to take a break.
- Alternate between "heavy" & "light" activities.
- Rest your hips and knees by lying down - get the weight off your joints.

Walking:

- Wear supportive shoes. Consider foot orthotics if you require more support (talk to your therapist or doctor).
- Wear supportive shoes in the house while on your feet (house cleaning, working in the kitchen).
- Consider using a cane. It should be placed in the hand OPPOSITE to the sore leg. Correct height for cane: stand with walking shoes on, look straight ahead (not down at the cane) - the handle should be even with your wrist.

Standing:

- Alternate between sitting and standing. Sitting requires less energy.
- Sit to do activities such as ironing & meal preparation.
- Wear supportive shoes.

Stairs:

- Use escalators and elevators.
- Minimize number of trips. Use the handrail.
- Go up and down stairs one leg at a time:
 - going up - lead with the stronger leg,
 - going down - lead with the more painful leg.

Sitting:

- Choose firm chairs. Use raised cushions or raise the chair with blocks.
- Use good body mechanics to get up; move to edge of the seat, keep stronger leg closest to the chair, and place weaker leg out in front.
- Support feet on a small stool.
- In the bathroom: use raised toilet seat, bath bench, or hydraulic bath seat.

Squatting:

- Store most frequently used items between hip and shoulder height.
- Use long-handled devices such as a long-handled shoe horn, long-handled reacher, long-handled dust pan, long-handled toe washer, long-handled bathtub scrubber.
- Pull-out shelves in kitchen & work areas minimize bending and squatting.

Carrying & Lifting:

- Use a trolley, "dolly", wheelbarrow or cart. Always use a buggy when grocery shopping.
- Divide loads into smaller portions.
- Avoid putting things on the floor. Plan ahead to have space available at a convenient height.
- Stay at your ideal body weight.

Dressing:

- Try elastic shoelaces, sock-aid and/or long-handled reacher.

Sleeping:

- Consider putting a layer of egg-crate foam or memory foam on top of your mattress.
- Use a pillow between your legs when sleeping on your side.

Exercising:

- Stronger muscles and good flexibility make daily activities easier.
- Stay motivated. Focus on the positive benefits of exercising. Find activities that you enjoy.
- Try activities like swimming, water exercises, cycling, walking.
- Avoid over-doing it by taking short breaks.

Key Points:

Take frequent breaks BEFORE pain reminds you.

Plan ahead.

Wear supportive shoes.

Store frequently used items between hip & shoulder height.

Use long handled items to minimize bending & crouching.

Keep physically fit.