

Inflammatory Arthritis Education Series

Protecting Your Joints

This program has been reviewed and endorsed by



Canadian Arthritis
Patient Alliance

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from **abbvie**
all content was developed independently by
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Objectives

By the end of the session, you will:

- Identify daily activities that may be difficult due to inflammatory arthritis
- Learn strategies for making these activities easier
- Learn about assistive devices and their use in inflammatory arthritis

Why protect your joints?

To reduce pain

To make activities easier to do

To make the best use of your energy and resources

To put less strain on joints that may be stiff and sore

How to protect your joints

Plan activities so you can develop a schedule that balances your energy requirements and stress on your joints

Use proper posture

Ask for help when needed

Use assistive devices

Plan ahead

Plan activities and how they will be completed

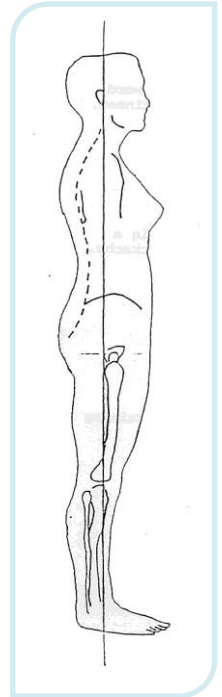
- Divide activities in to small tasks (for example, vacuum a room one day and another room the next)
- Keep things within reach at home and at work to optimize movement of affected joints

Use effective body mechanics

- **User proper posture when:**

- Standing: keep your head aligned with your body
- Sitting: adjust height of chair, desk and worktable to minimize strain
- Doing tasks: use largest joint available when doing an activity

- **Change positions frequently**
- **Take frequent breaks to help prevent the overuse muscle groups and joints**

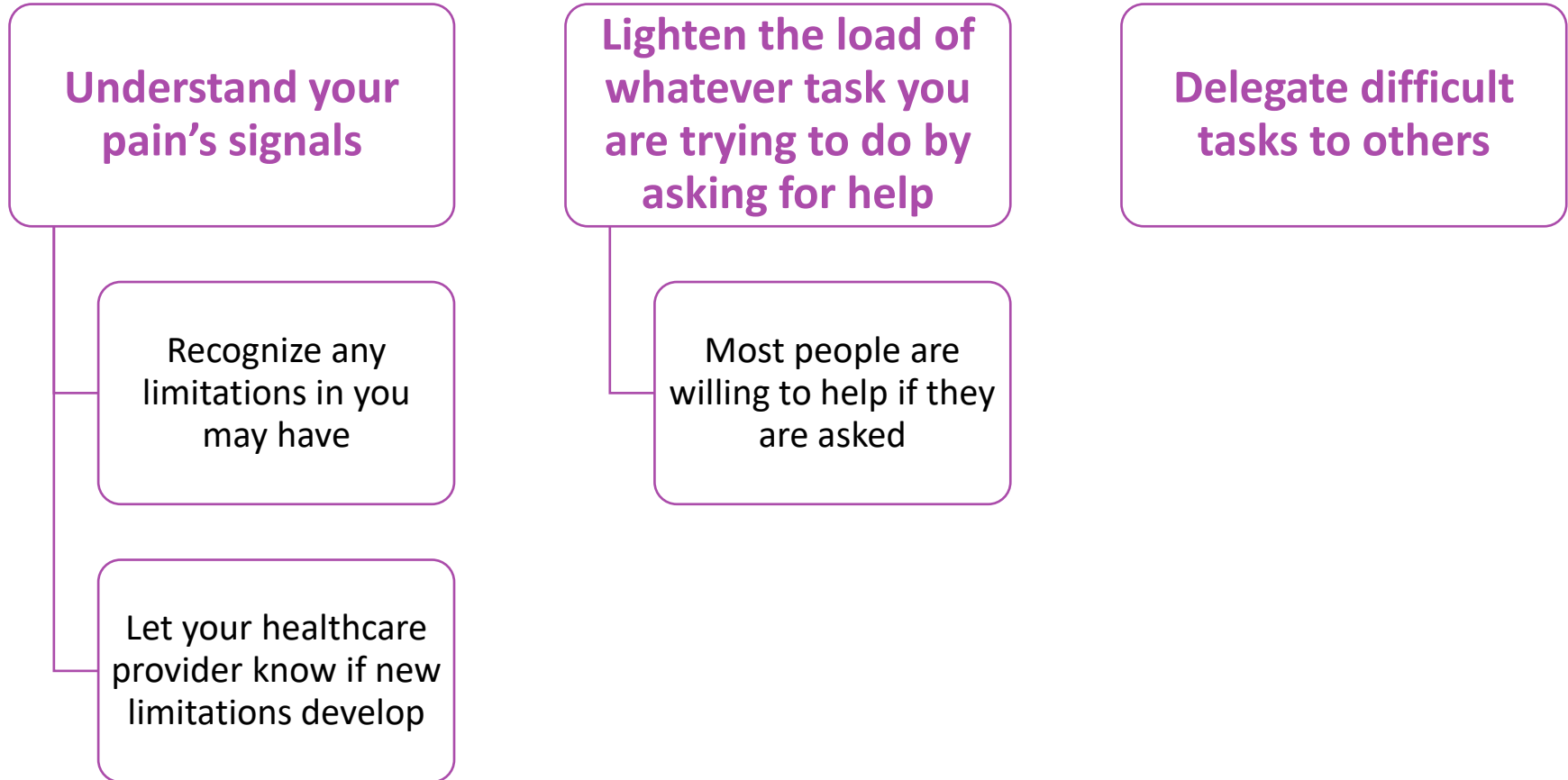


Use effective body mechanics

Reduce effort and strain on affected joints

- Avoid lifting when possible
- Use large, strong muscles and joints rather than smaller, weaker ones (sling a purse over your shoulder instead of gripping one with your hand)
- Use legs for lifting, not the back
- Keep movements centred between the hips and shoulders
- Keep loads close to the body and as light as possible
- Divide loads between both arms or hands (not the fingers)

Ask for help when needed



Assistive devices



- Use assistive devices to make tasks easier
- Look for devices that provide:
 - Traction
 - Leverage
 - Enlarged grips
- Use splints or braces if needed

Choosing assistive devices

- Choices often depend on which joints are affected and the kind of problems you may be experiencing
- The devices help you avoid or minimize movements that stress affected joints



- If you are having difficulty, a healthcare provider can help you choose the appropriate aids
 - You may require a doctor's referral

Uses for assistive devices

Assistive devices can be used for:



- Turning and opening (rubber materials, can openers)
- Holding and grasping (thicker pens, built-up kitchen utensils and gardening tools)
- Reaching (long-handled devices)
- Carrying and lifting (rolling carts or trolleys)
- Walking (canes, foot orthotics, proper shoes)

Choosing proper footwear

Footwear can go a long way to easing foot, knee and / or hip pain

Choose shoes with:

- Good arch support
- Firm sole that does not twist
- Firm heel counter
- Laces
- Light weight
- Rocker and/or non-slip sole
- Enough room for insoles
- Wide and deep enough space for toes



Local community resources

Check with your healthcare provider to find out where you can find:

- Assistive devices
- Supportive footwear
- Foot orthotics
- Hand, wrist and finger splints
- Braces

Key messages

- To make daily activities easier to do and reduce pain and damage to your joints:
 - Plan ahead
 - Use proper posture
 - Ask for help when needed
 - Use assistive devices
- Get a referral to see an occupational therapist or physiotherapist for more in-depth assessments and assistance
- Ask about funding resources that may be available to you

Resources

Arthritis Consumer Experts

www.jointhehealth.org

The Arthritis Foundation

www.arthritis.org

The Arthritis Society

www.arthritis.ca

Canadian Arthritis Patient Alliance

www.arthritispatient.ca

Canadian Psoriasis Network

www.cpn-rcp.com

Canadian Spondylitis Association

www.spondylitis.ca

Rheuminfo

www.rheuminfo.com

Canadian Medical Association

www.cma.ca

Canadian Nurses Association

www.cna-nurses.ca/cna

Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists

www.caot.ca

Canadian Physiotherapy Association

www.thesehands.ca

Dietitians of Canada

www.dietitians.ca

Resources

- Lorig K, Fries J. *The Arthritis Helpbook: A Tested Self-management Program for Coping with Arthritis and Fibromyalgia*. Sixth edition. Perseus Books, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2006.
- Afshar B. *The Arthritis Foundation's Tips for Good Living with Arthritis*. Arthritis Foundation, Atlanta, Georgia, 2001.