

This information sheet has been written for people whose hands are affected by arthritis. It provides general information about how to look after your hands and manage the pain.

Common Symptoms

- Aching joints particularly the thumb and finger
- Morning stiffness – often takes time to get joints going
- Swelling
- Difficulty doing activities like turning taps, keys and opening jars.



Tips for managing symptoms and looking after your joints

Exercises

- Don't be afraid to use your hands
- Regular exercises and movement is important in reducing stiffness and keeping your joints and muscles working
- Providing warmth to the joints prior to exercises can be a useful strategy to improve movement
- Check the Physitrack link provided for exercises to assist your joints

Splints

Splints can be helpful to assist with pain and function. As everyone is so different it is probably better if you can be assessed prior to purchasing a splint.

Pain relief

- Microwaveable hot packs or soaking the hands in warm water is often an effective pain reliever for stiff painful joints
- Simple analgesic such as Panadol or Nurofen can be helpful
- Applying anti-inflammatory creams/gels directly to the painful joints may be beneficial
- Discuss with your GP or pharmacist regarding medications and creams before commencing use.



Avoid postures that stress your joints



- Try to maintain the "O" shape of the thumb and fingertips this helps with pinch and reducing pain when gripping
- Start an activity diary to record the activities that most aggravate your hands and bring in to your first appointment
- The Independent Living Centre (ILC) or Anstey's in Newcastle/East Maitland have some aids to assist function.



Supplements

- Some people find the benefit from supplements such as fish oil or glucosamine
- Please see the link below for the most up to date information from the Arthritis Australia website.

<https://arthritisaustralia.com.au/managing-arthritis/living-with-arthritis/complementary-treatments-and-therapies/glucosamine-and-chondroitin/>

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