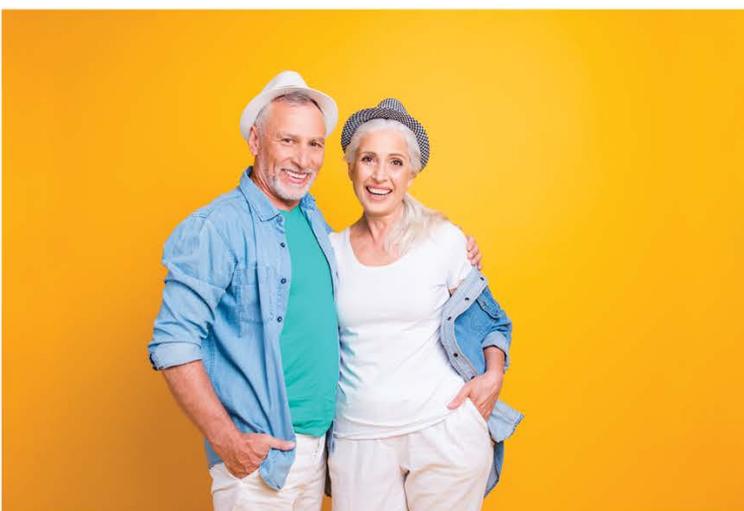


# ARTHRITIS LIFESTYLE MANAGEMENT GUIDE

Over 150 useful tips. Because life doesn't end when arthritis begins.



## PREFACE

The Arthritis Patient Advisory Board (APAB) is comprised of volunteer advocates with arthritis who bring personal experience and arthritis knowledge to research decision making at Arthritis Research Canada. In the capacity of expert patients, they ensure the patient perspective is represented on research matters related to the prevention, treatment, and self-management of arthritis. Individually and collectively, they communicate research information and findings to arthritis patients, professional organizations, and the general public. One vehicle utilized to communicate information to the general public is through The Arthritis Newsletter, a quarterly e-newsletter published by APAB. Of the articles published, the arthritis tips for lifestyle management have consistently been the most popular. For the convenience of those interested in utilizing these tips, it was decided to compile these into one practical guide.

The ***Arthritis Lifestyle Management Guide*** is a compilation of many techniques used by Arthritis Research Canada's Arthritis Patient Advisory Board members to cope with the everyday challenges faced by people living with arthritis. The information provided in this publication is only a guide. It is not intended to replace the recommendations of your health care provider(s). This guide seeks to help people with arthritis by providing alternate approaches to performing everyday tasks, while helping protect the joints affected by arthritis.

### Feedback

We welcome your comments: [patientadvisoryboard@arthritisresearch.ca](mailto:patientadvisoryboard@arthritisresearch.ca)

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| <b>AROUND THE HOUSE .....</b>                | <b>4</b>  |
| IN THE KITCHEN .....                         | 5         |
| HOUSEHOLD TASKS.....                         | 6         |
| DRESSING .....                               | 7         |
| TOILETTE .....                               | 7         |
| TIME TO RELAX .....                          | 8         |
| <b>AROUND THE GARDEN.....</b>                | <b>10</b> |
| <b>AROUND TOWN.....</b>                      | <b>12</b> |
| SHOPPING .....                               | 12        |
| GROCERY SHOPPING.....                        | 13        |
| DRIVING .....                                | 14        |
| <b>TRAVEL .....</b>                          | <b>16</b> |
| AIDS.....                                    | 16        |
| MEDICATIONS.....                             | 17        |
| LUGGAGE .....                                | 17        |
| PLANE.....                                   | 17        |
| SECURITY.....                                | 18        |
| HOTEL .....                                  | 18        |
| AIR TRAVEL ASSISTANCE.....                   | 18        |
| DESTINATION .....                            | 19        |
| <b>COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY .....</b>              | <b>20</b> |
| STUDYING .....                               | 20        |
| FINAL EXAMS .....                            | 21        |
| <b>ENJOYING THE HOLIDAYS .....</b>           | <b>23</b> |
| MAKE A LIST.....                             | 23        |
| SEND YOUR REGRETS.....                       | 24        |
| REPEAT AFTER ME...“NO!” .....                | 24        |
| KISS – KEEP IT SIMPLE SILLY .....            | 24        |
| BREAK WITH FAMILY TRADITIONS.....            | 25        |
| TAKE THE “PAIN” OUT OF HOLIDAY SHOPPING..... | 25        |
| MAINTAIN HEALTHY HABITS! .....               | 26        |

## AROUND THE HOUSE

At home, simple tasks can become overwhelming challenges when you live with arthritis. Buttoning a shirt or slicing a tomato can be impossible if you don't have the right tools. Arthritis Patient Advisory Board (APAB) members would like to share with you some of our favourite techniques and products that are easy on the hands and other weak joints. We hope these tips will help make your everyday tasks a little easier.

APAB members have also benefited from the guidance of physical and occupational therapists, who have helped us learn better approaches to everyday tasks. Talk to your doctor about meeting with a physiotherapist and an occupational therapist. A physiotherapist helps you maintain and make the most use of your range of motion and strength. An occupational therapist helps you find practical ways to manage particular tasks and minimize the effort involved. Physiotherapists and occupational therapists will help you to be more aware of your body mechanics while performing household tasks.



## IN THE KITCHEN

- Organize your cupboards so that the items you use most are easy to reach.
- A lightweight step stool can help you reach items without having to stretch to reach.
- Alleviate the discomfort of standing at the stove or sink for long periods by standing on a gel-filled mat or sitting on a barstool.
- Think “lightweight” when purchasing dishes. Heavy stoneware dishes are difficult to grab and loading them in and out of cupboards and the dishwasher can be hard on your finger joints and wrists.
- Two handles are better than one. Using a pot or a pan with two handles helps distribute the weight more evenly between both of your hands and wrists.
- Scrubbing can be hard on the joints, so let your pots soak overnight with dishwasher detergent in them.
- Painful, swollen joints can make chopping and slicing difficult. Reduced hand strength requires ergonomically designed knives. These knives are much easier to grasp than traditional knives and allow you to use your whole arm to cut and chop.
- Fat is better than thin: Trying to grip small, thin handles can be painful and almost impossible. Buy small kitchen tools such as potato peelers with thick handles. They are easier to hold and reduce pressure on your joints. To avoid replacing your kitchen tools, simply purchase foam tubing to slide over handles at an “Aids to Daily Living” store in your area.
- Let a food processor do the chopping, slicing, mixing, and shredding. Because of its weight, a food processor is best stored on the counter for easy access – new designs have made them an attractive addition to your kitchen.
- Not able to open a can of tuna, one APAB member was motivated to purchase a one-touch can opener. An electric can opener would have done just as well, but this member liked the fact that the one-touch was small, lightweight, and easy to store. Bottle and jar openers are also available.
- Use a wet washcloth to anchor bowls and cutting boards to the countertop.
- “Twist off” jar lids are easier to open if you circle them with a wide rubber band. Rubber bands can be purchased economically so leave one in place on the lid of every jar in your refrigerator or cupboard.
- When possible, double your recipe. This will give you a break from cooking the next day, or you can freeze the leftovers for those days when your arthritis symptoms make cooking impossible.
- Reduced range of motion can be frustrating. To avoid the expense of reach extenders and grabbers to get to items at the back of the refrigerator, on the top shelf of your closet, or that sock stuck on the far wall of the clothes dryer, get a metal clothes hanger, stretch it out to full length without damaging the hook, and voila, you have a grabber. One APAB member has one on most door handles in her home.
- Use a wheeled island or cart to move food to the table. Locking casters are an important feature to ensure stability while stationary.

## HOUSEHOLD TASKS

### Laundry

- Socks and small undergarments can be difficult to get out of the bottom of the washing machine. Mesh bags help keep small items together so they are easier to collect and don't get lost.
- Say goodbye to your iron. If you miss the dryer alarm and the clothes become wrinkled, no problem, just a 5-minute reheat in the dryer will release wrinkles from clothes. If you must iron, put a chair or stool in your ironing area.
- Avoid lifting heavy detergent containers. Although buying in bulk can save money, the heavy detergent containers can be difficult to lift. Have a friend or family member help transfer the detergent into smaller bottles.
- To avoid carrying a heavy hamper down the stairs, sort your clothes, place a load in a sack or pillowcase, and then simply drag or throw the sack down the stairs.
- Laundromat: Use a pushcart to bring clothes to and from the Laundromat. Remember to push the cart, not pull.

### Maintaining Floors and Carpets

- Use brooms and dust pans with long handles to sweep floors; they will allow you to stand upright rather than bend while sweeping.
- Vacuum cleaners can be difficult to push and pull, so consider an electric broom instead.

### Cleaning

- Keep cleaning supplies distributed among the house so that you don't have to carry them far, especially if you live in a two-storey home.
- An apron with deep pockets can make it easier to carry cleaning supplies and dust cloths from room to room.
- Dusters with telescopic handles allow you to get high and low spots without having to reach up or bend down.
- Investigate your eligibility to receive subsidized home cleaning support through the provincial government's Ministry of Health.

### Making the Bed

- Maneuvering weighty bedding is difficult. One of the biggest challenges is the dreaded bottom fitted sheet that sometimes "just" fits the mattress. Buying a single flat sheet to use as a bottom sheet lessens the burden of trying to fit a tight sheet on the mattress. If you don't want to give up the fitted sheet, try using a long-handled wooden spoon to tuck the sheet under the mattress or ask a visiting friend or relative for assistance.

## DRESSING

- Buttoning and zipping clothes can be challenging; fortunately, there are button aids and zipper aids that can help make this task easier.
  - Avoid wearing pants with zippers and buttons when possible, especially around the house. Trendy yoga pants, which can be worn both at home and about town, are a great alternative for both men and women.
  - For shirts with button cuffs, have buttons sewn on sleeve cuffs with elastic thread. This will allow your hand to slip through without having to undo the button.
  - Craft stores carry packages of key rings that can be attached to zipper tabs to make them easier to grasp. You may need someone to help you install these rings.
- If you have difficulty tying a necktie, purchase a clip-on-tie or bow tie. These ties offer the benefit of not having to slip the tie over the head when your shoulders are compromised.
- Put your belt through all the belt loops on your pants before stepping into the pants as this avoids stressful reaching behind your back to thread the belt in place.
- For women, consider buying a front-fastening bra; it will be less onerous to do up.
- Slip-on shoes are much easier to put on and take off, and a long handled shoehorn will prevent you from having to bend down to put on your shoes. If you do not want to replace your lace-up shoes, consider purchasing elastic shoelaces that don't require untying. Despite the convenience, some may find slip-on shoes easy to FALL OUT OF.
- Buy summer sandals with Velcro straps for easy removal (these are also great for travelling and passing through airport security checks).
- Jewelry clasps, which are often finicky, can be impossible to fasten. Magnetic clasps easily attach to your existing jewelry. They use magnetic force to effortlessly pull the ends together to secure your jewelry in place. Choose necklaces that are long enough to slip over your head.
- Lessen the load: Heavy briefcases and purses can add unnecessary strain to hands and shoulders.
- Carry only necessary items in your purse or briefcase. If possible, switch to a backpack in order to distribute the weight. Carrying purses and briefcases with wide straps that cross the chest and shoulder allows hands-free shopping. Gentlemen, remember that sitting on a bulky wallet can cause pain in the back and hips.

## TOILETTE

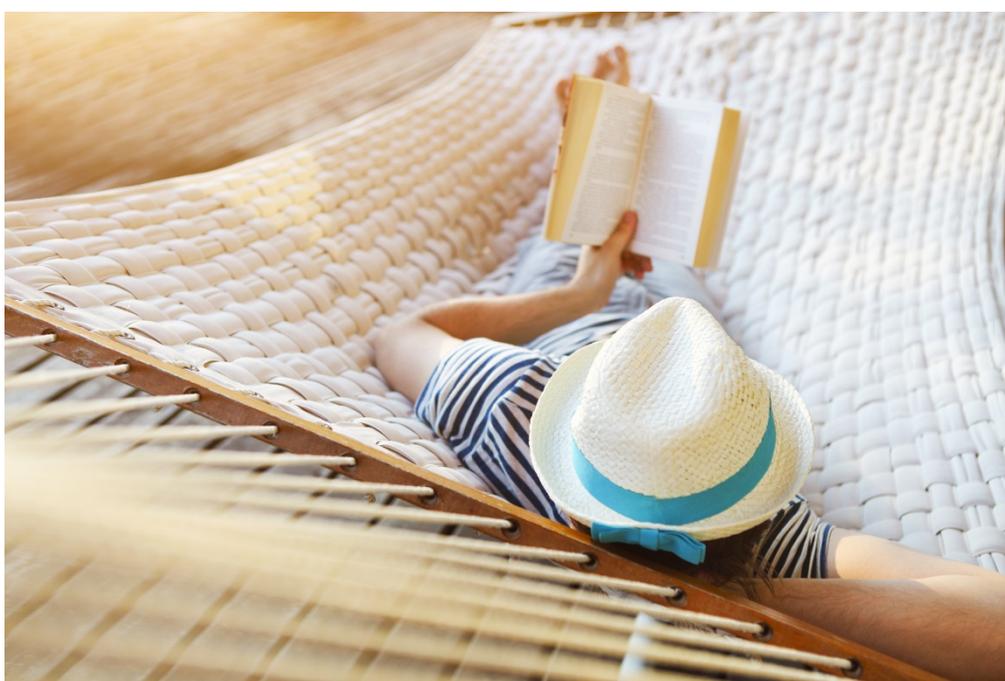
- An electric toothbrush makes it easier to maintain proper dental hygiene.
- Do you find flossing a problem and something just too intricate to manage with your hands? Buy pre-threaded floss harps.
- People with arthritis probably appreciate lightweight objects more than most. The good news is that items such as blow dryers are now being redesigned to make them easier to use. Check for the word "lightweight" on the box.
- Some days, squeezing a shampoo bottle may be impossible, so purchase pump shampoo and conditioner bottles which can be utilized using the palm of your hand. If your favourite shampoo/conditioner doesn't provide that option, buy a pump bottle at the dollar store and have someone fill it with your favourite brand.

- Tabletop nail clippers are anchored to a base so that you can simply place your nail in the cutter and press down the clip with the palm of your hand.
- Grabbing and twisting ball-type faucet handles can be difficult. Doing it with wet hands is an added challenge. A faucet lever handle is easier to use. This type of handle can be pushed forward or backward with the weight of your hand. Door lever handles work equally as well; simply push the handle down with your hand or elbow.
- If your toilet is too low, purchase an adapter to raise the seat. These are available at most drug stores.
- Grab bars can be installed over the bathtub and near the toilet to prevent falls and make it easier to get up. A suction mat in the tub or shower can also prevent falls – wet the tub first for better suction.

## TIME TO RELAX

### Sitting/Reading/Watching TV

- When purchasing chairs, remember that armrests offer support and help you stand from a sitting position. Also, chairs that are too low or too soft can be difficult to get in and out of. Physiotherapists and occupational therapists can help you choose a chair that is right for you.
- APAB members rave about their recliners; however, they caution everyone to try them out in the store before buying. Make sure the recliner provides proper neck and lumbar support and relieves pressure on the hips and knees.
- Try not to sit for longer than an hour without taking a quick break to stand up and stretch.
- A memory foam chair cushion (minimum 2” thick) can help alleviate hip pain when sitting.
- Position the TV so that you are not tilting your neck up or sideways to view. Watching TV with your neck in an awkward position can cause neck pain.
- When holding a book is difficult, use a lap desk or firm pillow. E-readers are good alternatives to books because they are lighter, easier to hold, and transport well.



## Sleeping

- It can be exhausting and sometimes impossible to manipulate heavy bedding. Replacing heavy covers and bedspreads with near weightless feather, down, silk, or microfibre-filled duvets can alleviate this problem. Another solution to heavy bedding is a lightweight electric blanket. If you have a partner who likes a warmer or a cooler bed than you do, buy a blanket with separate temperature controls.
- Heating pads can be very helpful for hip pain. Position yourself on the heating pad. Most of the new heating pads turn off after 2 hours, making them easy and safe to use.
- Memory foam mattress toppers work great for alleviating joint (hip) pain to allow for more restful sleep.
- A bedside lamp that you can switch on and off with a gentle touch is essential.
- Take a warm bath or a hot steamy shower to help you relax before bed. For added enjoyment, add natural oils such as lavender.
- Satin nightgowns and pajamas do not “stick” to cotton and flannel sheets, making it easier to turn over and slide in and out of bed. Satin sheets are also effective.
- To avoid a trip hazard, ensure the path from the bed to the toilet is unobstructed. Remove scatter rugs from the floor to avoid tripping on their edges.
- If you need to get up in the night, consider using a small night light to safely illuminate the access corridor or the bathroom.
- It’s much easier to slip and fall in ordinary socks. If you don’t like slippers and do like to wear socks, buy socks with grip pads along their soles (available from medical supply houses). They’re soft and warm and can be tossed in the wash with your regular socks.

## Notes:

## AROUND THE GARDEN

“Container gardening is so much fun. You can have one or a hundred pots; it all depends on how much time and energy you have. It’s magical watching what you’ve planted grow, blossom, and sometimes bear fruit. To avoid planting every year, consider perennial plants and flowers. Have a chair and small table handy where you can sit and rest or enjoy a coffee break. During the summer months, my sundeck is my refuge. Sitting amidst the beauty of my flowers is so peaceful. Sometimes I go out to my sundeck in the middle of the night, when everyone is asleep, and find comfort in the beauty of my garden.”

— Joyce, Arthritis Patient Advisory Board member



- Everyone loves a garden, but often a lust for too many high maintenance plants comes over us with the arrival of spring. Before rushing off to the nearest garden centre, ask yourself how able you are to transplant, weed, or prune, and how much time each week you will be able to devote to the upkeep of your garden. When planning your container garden, place the heavy pots or the tall plants in the back, the smaller pots and shorter plants in front and plan the location so that it’s permanent. Pot dollies work well for moving heavier pots. For those with limited range of motion, you can have someone raise your plants on top of benches or hang them on a post, for easy access.
- Instead of a heavy watering can, use a lightweight water hose.
- Take time to plan your garden carefully. If you want to have a low maintenance garden, choose a planting scheme with a primary emphasis on easy care perennials.
- Minimize weeding by making generous use of mulch. You can use landscape fabric for this purpose, wood or bark chips, even shredded newspapers and lawn clippings.

- Whether you have a green thumb or not, working in the garden can be rewarding – especially if you have the right tools. Home improvement stores, garden centres, and landscape shops carry garden tools made for people with hand and strength limitations. The tools, rakes, spades, hoes and three-prong claws are smaller in width than conventional garden tools. They have a lightweight aluminum shaft that extends from 32 to 50 inches and a thick rubber grip for ease of handling. Tools like these make bigger gardening jobs easier.
- Keep your pruners and clippers sharp and well-oiled to make cutting and pruning easier. Check your local hardware store for sharpening services.
- If the handles of your tools are too thin to grip comfortably, wrap them with insulation foam and secure the foam with electrical tape. And, take breaks from doing any activities that require gripping for long periods of time.
- Transport your garden supplies in a garden cart or wear a carpenter’s apron to carry small tools.
- Container gardens offer many benefits even for those with only a small outdoor space.
- For those who don’t have a spot for a garden, look into “community gardens” or “food garden plots,” available in some communities. These are good places to meet others, learn from fellow gardeners, and generally feel supported.

**Notes:**

## AROUND TOWN



### SHOPPING

Whether we shop for pleasure or necessity, shopping is a part of life and some enjoy it more than others. Those who do enjoy shopping often take pleasure in sharing the experience with a companion. Retail therapy with friends can be so much fun! But if the only companion happens to be arthritis, the experience can quickly turn unpleasant, even for the most devoted of shoppers. Obstacles seem to be everywhere: difficulty handling clothes hangers, trying on clothes, reaching for and lifting items, bagging items, maneuvering shopping carts, standing in long line-ups, picking coins from your wallet, and loading and unloading purchases into a vehicle. However challenging, arthritis also makes us very resourceful; we find solutions that will allow us to adapt to our new reality, continue to shop for the necessities and to enjoy a little retail therapy now and again! Here are a few solutions to the physical limitations that you may be facing:

- *Let your fingers do the walking.* To narrow your search for items, telephone the stores before leaving home or search out items on the company websites.
- Comfortable shoes are critical to having an enjoyable shopping experience. An occupational therapist can recommend shoe options that will help you deal with your specific needs and advise you if special orthotic inserts are necessary.
- If clothes shopping, wear garments that can easily be taken off and on in the dressing room.

- Lighten the load. Before leaving home, take all unnecessary objects out of your purse.
- A hand-held purse can cause trauma to your hands and wrists and stress the joints of the elbow and shoulder. Consider a small over-the-shoulder bag with a side strap that can be worn across the chest. Remember to switch sides often.
- Phone a friend and ask him/her to join you. Friends who understand your limitations can be particularly helpful when it's time to cart heavy bags. A friend can also provide assistance in the dressing room when shopping for clothes.
- Consider investing in a folding cart to carry items to and from your vehicle. Remember to push rather than pull your cart.
- Practice proper standing posture when waiting in long lineups at the checkout counter.
- Some practical advice – listen to your body, and do not shop till you drop!
- Allow yourself a treat before heading home.
- Take advantage of as many delivery services as you can.
- Shop online. It can save you time and physical effort. The Better Business Bureau of Canada has tips to ensure you have a safe online shopping experience: [www.bbb.org](http://www.bbb.org)

## GROCERY SHOPPING

- Write your grocery list to correspond with your grocery store's layout. This will help you to avoid retracing your steps.
- If you find chopping vegetables problematic, add free, pre-chopped packaged vegetables to your shopping list (the convenience can sometimes outweigh the cost).
- If buying in bulk is unmanageable, ask a family member or friend to help. Perhaps you will find it useful to schedule a monthly shopping trip for those bulky items, and ask for help getting them from the car to the house.
- Some grocery stores have electric scooters with large baskets for use by people with mobility issues. Determine which stores provide this service and frequent them when needed.
- Keep a reacher in the vehicle for use when grocery shopping. With a reacher, you can avoid bending over or stretching up to reach for small items.
- If you have Raynaud's syndrome, bring a pair of gloves. Gloves will help you avoid the change in temperature when reaching for items in the refrigerated and freezer sections.
- Plastic bag handles can be difficult to carry when the finger joints are swollen or painful. Bring your own cloth or paper shopping bags. These can be carried close to your body with both hands, thereby eliminating strain on your joints.
- Ask the grocery clerk to pack your bags "lightly" to avoid having to lift and carry heavy bags.
- Don't be embarrassed to ask for assistance with your groceries. Most grocery stores have employees available (and eager) to bring your groceries to your vehicle.
- Shop more often to avoid the burden of managing a large number of items. Buying fewer items each trip will make grocery shopping less onerous.
- If you're tired when you get home, unpack only refrigerated and frozen foods. The rest can wait till you've had a rest.
- Many local grocery stores now have home delivery service. Take advantage when necessary.

## DRIVING

Driving a motor vehicle is a basic activity of daily living for many Canadians and can be of crucial importance for people with arthritis. Functional independence and mobility can be threatened by this disease, and driving can present challenges that most people never imagine. In fact, excruciating pain, deformity, stiffness, and weakness of the joints can make driving difficult and sometimes impossible. Even simple maneuvers such as getting in and out of the vehicle, reversing and shoulder checking, gripping the steering wheel, and shifting a standard transmission can become significant obstacles when you have arthritis. Here are a few strategies for having a successful driving experience:

- Before purchasing or leasing a vehicle, assess your ergonomic needs and physical limitations in order to identify features that would make driving easier. For example:
  - Keyless entry systems and push button starters are useful if you have problems using keys. Carry spare batteries in your wallet or purse. Automatic vehicle starters are also available and will warm-up the vehicle before you enter.
  - Power-assisted steering can be very helpful in easing stress on hands, arms, and shoulders.
  - Power window controls are much easier to manipulate while driving than manual windows.
  - Adjustable steering columns can be moved forward to allow more room to get in and out of the vehicle, and can be moved back to a comfortable setting for driving.
  - Make sure the door height allows you enough room to comfortably get into the vehicle. Also, test your ability to shut the door. Some doors are heavy and tough to close. Note: Although two-door vehicles often have wider doors, the door can sometimes be heavy and difficult to manipulate.
  - A power adjustable driver's seat can be a real bonus because it allows you to adjust for legroom, seat tilt/angle/height, and lumbar support.
  - Pedal modification, left foot accelerators, and electric hand brakes are often helpful, as are extended gearshift levers.
- Practice proper body mechanics to get in and out of a vehicle, and use proper sitting posture while driving. An occupational or physiotherapist can provide guidance and can address driving-related concerns and challenges.
- To make getting into and out of your vehicle easier, cover cloth seats with vinyl seat covers. In a pinch, use a large green garbage bag placed on the seat. An alternative to vinyl seat covers is a beaded seat cover. The beaded seat limits friction, enabling you to "roll" in and out of the seat. Some find beaded seats cool in the hot weather because they allow air to circulate between the seat and the driver.
- Wear your splints to support painful joints, but do not wear them if they interfere with your ability to handle the vehicle. Instead, speak to your occupational therapist to see whether your splints can be modified to meet your driving needs.
- Driving gloves can provide a better grip on the steering wheel, lessening the force of the hold required on the steering wheel for vehicle control and preventing your hands from slipping.
- If you are unable to wear gloves or if you find gloves cumbersome, consider purchasing a leather steering wheel cover. It makes the wheel less slippery and adds to the rim's thickness.

- Relieve the restrictive feel caused by seat belts that dig, irritate or strangle by investing in a sheepskin seatbelt cover. Do not adjust the amount of slack in the system yourself, as it may affect the safe functioning of the belt.
- Turning the key to start the vehicle can be painful. Two items may help:
  - Specially designed key fobs are available for people who have arthritis. These key fobs provide extra leverage and grip when turning keys. They can be loaded to carry other keys such as house keys, mail keys, etc.
  - Enlarged key handles (key turners) which fit over your keys.
- Install wide-angle rear and side view mirrors to enhance shoulder checks when changing lanes. Some mirrors have double sided tape on the back so they are easy to install.
- Purchase a gas cap wrench and keep it in the vehicle. These are designed to decrease joint stress when loosening gas caps. Alternatively, for those with compromised grip strength, a rubber jar opener can be used to twist off the gas cap.
- Full service gas pumps are hard to find. Go to your favourite gas company's website as some have station locators that will allow you to search for the full-service pump nearest you (example: Husky Station Locator).
- Avoid busy times on the road and avoid freeway driving where the need for frequent lane changing may arise.
- Planning a long trip: Pack an emergency kit which includes an outline for your trip. Alternatively, consider investing in a GPS system with voice guidance capacity or access an app through your smart phone.
- Note: If your medications are making you drowsy or are impairing your concentration, speak to your doctor. He or she may be able to suggest non-drowsy substitute medications.

**Notes:**

## TRAVEL



As one Arthritis Patient Advisory Board (APAB) member recently observed, “Air travel can be ‘hell’ when you’re dealing with arthritis issues.” Yes, travelling with arthritis takes a little more preparation than normal. APAB members know well the challenges people with arthritis face when traveling and have learned that careful preparation is the key to avoiding frustration and making your travel experiences more enjoyable:

### AIDS

- If you need aids to assist with your activities of daily living, make sure that you have them with you in a carry-on bag. That way, if your luggage is lost or delayed, you won’t be without them. It is prudent to get a note from your doctor or occupational therapist explaining your requirements for these aids in order to avoid difficulties or potential confiscation.

## MEDICATIONS

- Pack medications in your carry-on luggage; losing these can ruin your trip.
- If travelling by air, avoid needless questions and possible confiscation by keeping medications in their original, marked containers, or carry a doctor's note confirming that the prescriptions are for you. A doctor's note is especially important for medications that need to be refrigerated or include syringes.
- Check well in advance of the trip to ensure that you have an adequate forward supply of medication, and re-fill any needed prescriptions before you go.
- Always bring more medication than you think you'll need. Ensure you anticipate unforeseen circumstances, such as layovers or delays.
- Put any medications you may need to take during your flight in a readily accessible place (a zip lock bag in a pocket or tucked in a purse works well).
- Upon arrival you may wish to transfer your medications to a weekly or monthly compartmented pill container (cheap to buy at a dollar store) to help you keep track of your medications should you become disoriented by date or time changes.

## LUGGAGE

- Purchase wheeled luggage so that you are not putting extra stress on your wrists and hands. Also, push rather than pull your luggage to avoid straining your shoulder. Four-wheeled luggage is easier to maneuver than two-wheeled.
- Pack lightly. Remember that you'll have to lift this luggage in and out of your car, onto the scale at check-in, and off the luggage carousel.
- Keep your carry-on piece extremely light if you plan to lift it into and out of the over-head bin on the airplane yourself.
- Mark your checked luggage with a brightly coloured ribbon or distinctive marker to avoid unnecessary lifting of luggage off the carousel that may not be yours. If you need help lifting your bag off the carousel, ask a fellow passenger to kindly assist.

## PLANE

- Getting in and out of an airplane seat can be difficult. Booking an aisle seat is best.
- To alleviate pain and stiffness, periodically walk up and down the aisle.
- For women, pack a pashmina scarf for the plane; it keeps the neck warm and can double as a blanket or neck roll. For men, a light sweater will serve the same purpose.
- Don't forget a neck pillow if that helps you to be more comfortable.
- Support stockings are good to use on flights as they can reduce swelling in legs and feet and aid your circulation.
- Drink plenty of water.

## SECURITY

- If possible, don't wear a belt with a metal buckle that you will be asked to remove when going through security.
- Do wear slip-on-shoes or sandals as these can be easily removed.
- If you have any joint replacements that set off the alarm signal, tell airport security personnel which joint is replaced. This may save you having to endure a more extensive search. Giving advance notice of artificial joints also allows security authorities to have a gender appropriate screener available to do a pat down should that be necessary following your passage through the detector frame.
- Avoid problems by visiting Pack Smart, Canadian Air Transport Security Authority: <http://www.catsa-acsta.gc.ca>

## HOTEL

- Having a hotel that has a restaurant and/or provides room service can be a welcomed relief. At the end of a busy day, you may not want to go back out or leave your hotel room.
- If you follow a fitness routine, make sure that the hotel has appropriate facilities. Don't forget your bathing suit!!
- Hotel bathtubs and shower stalls more often than not have smooth, highly polished surfaces that soap, shampoo and conditioners make very slippery. A wet hand towel on the tub/stall floor helps provide the safety needed for entering, exiting and maneuvering while showering or bathing.
- Location, location, location: Select a hotel close to the destinations on your itinerary (beach, restaurants, museums, etc.). If you plan on using public transport, research the accessibility from the hotel. While booking your room, request specific room location needs (e.g. near elevator, near pool...).

## AIR TRAVEL ASSISTANCE

- Find ways to save your energy for your destination and not waste it all on getting there. For example:
  - If possible book a nonstop flight to avoid walking between departure gates and extending travel time.
  - Order a wheelchair or golf-cart shuttle to meet you at check-in. You can also be escorted to your departure gate as well as any subsequent stops prior to your destination.
  - Ask for help storing luggage in the over-head bin.
  - Don't hesitate to avail yourself of "early" or "assisted boarding". If you are slow or stiff in your movements, you don't want to be rushed or squeeze past other passengers on your way to your seat. Additionally, early or assisted boarding will usually mean the overhead bin will not already be filled with luggage from others that forces you to stow your items several rows away.

## **DESTINATION**

- Give yourself permission to “take a break.” Often we are guided by the schedule of those who do not face the challenges of arthritis. Pacing yourself will ensure your trip remains enjoyable.
- Bus Tours: If you have a difficult time keeping up with most tour groups, book an escorted tour for seniors. They provide a slower pace and are attentive to the needs of those with mobility issues. Let someone else do the driving – just sit back, relax and enjoy the sights.

## **Notes:**

## COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY



### STUDYING

Working toward a post-secondary diploma or degree is a challenge. Paired with arthritis, the challenge multiplies. The following tips can help you take the “pain” out of studying; in fact, implement these tips and you may enjoy the process! Good luck on your exams!

- Identify your optimal study time. “When my arthritis was at its worst, I would experience the most pain in the morning. However, as the day went on, my joints would loosen up and I would feel a bit of relief. Knowing this, I dedicated time each evening to studying.”... Sharan, Arthritis Advisory Board member
- Tailor your school supplies to your needs. Attaching a larger clasp to the zipper of your pencil case or adding foamy grips to pens can help you to avoid hand pain.
- Make sure that you’re comfortable with your study materials. Heavy 2” binders are burdensome and can make it difficult to find a particular set of lecture notes. Instead, organize different sections of each class into small folders. Or, organize your notes into flashcards; they are small and easy to carry. If you’re especially tech-savvy, there are many notecard applications available for smart phones. You can create flashcards on your computer and upload them directly to your phone for on-the-go studying!
- Customize your study space so that you feel comfortable. Set up your desk so that you have everything you need within arm’s reach. Keep a large water bottle at your desk to minimize trips for refills. Keep a warm blanket draped over your chair in case you get chilly.

- If you are studying on campus, plan ahead to ensure comfort. Bring a warm or cold beverage in a large thermos, a healthy snack, a seat cushion, and a blanket. You likely won't be the only person with a blanket – remember, comfort is the key to a successful study session.
- Team approach. Not only is studying with a group fun, it can also be a tremendous help to a person with arthritis. Studying with friends can be an effective way to learn, and provides 'people support' to help you with those simple physical tasks, such as carrying heavy books.
- Schedule study breaks. Scheduling breaks is important for everyone, not just those with arthritis. Taking breaks while studying gives you something to look forward to and gives your mind and body time to recharge for the next studying session.

## FINAL EXAMS

Check your exam schedule as soon as it is released. Allow yourself plenty of time to organize. Many colleges and universities have a resource centre for students with disabilities and chronic illnesses, work with them to ensure that your exam schedule is manageable. Never take on more than you can handle. Numerous studies have demonstrated a link between high stress and an increased incidence of arthritis flares. Ensure that you maintain a realistic workload.

- For your comfort, consider applying to write your exams in the resource center.
- Maximize your study sessions by organizing your notes ahead of time. Make summary tables, create colourful flashcards, and write study guides. Having a chronic condition and studying for finals is an exhausting combination that requires efficiency.
- Stay organized and plan ahead. Last-minute tasks can be a nightmare, especially if the pain level is worse than normal on the days leading up to a deadline.
- Make a study schedule and stick to it. Include down time in order to accommodate possible arthritis flares or any additional review you may need.
- Stay active. Be sure to take time between study sessions to go for a walk or enjoy other activities that will help you "unwind."
- Keep your professors and teachers in the loop. Some schools and universities offer aid to students with disabilities.

"Shortly after receiving my diagnosis I registered with the Disability Resource Centre (DRC) at the University of British Columbia, and they have provided me with an overwhelming amount of help and support. The DRC acts as a link between my professors, helping me to manage my schedule and adjust deadlines according to my needs. Furthermore, the DRC offers note-taking and tutoring services (at no cost) to those who require them." ... Sharan

**Notes:**

## ENJOYING THE HOLIDAYS



Pain, fatigue, depression, and many other arthritis related challenges can take the joy out of the holidays! Add to this a heavily-scheduled holiday calendar, family visits and related obligations, shopping, wrapping gifts, decorating, baking and cooking, and you have a recipe for an arthritis flare of ‘Hurricane Sandy’ dimensions! Arthritis Patient Advisory Board members have a few suggestions to help you cope with the challenges of the holidays. Be prepared to board up a few windows and do some sensible downsizing of activities too!

### **MAKE A LIST**

We are often unaware of how many obligations we face over the holidays until it is too late, and our bodies collapse from fatigue. To avoid this happening to you, take time to write a to-do list. On this list, include all the events you are scheduled to attend, any obligations related to attending those events, whether shopping for gifts, shopping for groceries, cleaning, decorating, baking, cooking or entertaining. **WHEW!**

Once your list is complete, you can plan your activities ahead of time and omit or simplify lower priority actions and tasks, depending on your own personal health challenges. Accept your limitations and exercise your ability to delegate tasks to others. People are invariably delighted to help. Remember, amazing is the power of a big smile and a sense of humour.

## SEND YOUR REGRETS

Has worrying about the number of events you have planned to attend during the holidays caused you anxiety? Are you concerned that holiday commitments may bring on an arthritis flare? If so, take a look at your calendar and consider rescheduling.

Keep the amount of entertaining you do over the holiday season to a minimum. There are 50 more weeks in the year where you can have people in for dinner. One of our APAB members declined a friend's Christmas party invitation and, instead, scheduled a get-together in January. *"I sent my regrets with an invitation for a dinner in January. My girlfriend understood and we had a great visit in January discussing our holiday adventures."*

## REPEAT AFTER ME... "NO!"

It is difficult to refuse an invitation to attend a holiday party. It is equally difficult to refuse a request for help from a friend, family member, church group, etc. If you want to take pleasure in the holidays, you must learn to say NO! If saying no is too difficult for you, begin by asking for time to assess your schedule. Then take the time to review your calendar and your to-do list and say "no" if the added commitment will jeopardize your well-being! Staying healthy and enjoying the holidays should be your top priority!

## KISS – KEEP IT SIMPLE SILLY

The most daunting challenge to holiday preparations and celebrations, particularly for those who enjoy doing things themselves, is to keep things simple. Here's how you can simplify holiday responsibilities:

- Formal dinner parties can be a lot of work. Instead, invite guests for an appetizer or dessert evening. If your arthritis has you exhausted by evening, host a lunch or brunch. Or better yet, organize a luncheon at a restaurant.
- A house filled with holiday decorations can be festive, but so can a simply decorated room. What makes a room special are not holiday trappings and tinsel, but the people who gather there - the family and friends who meet to enjoy the season's festivities, enjoy more with less.
- Host a (low-key) tree-decorating get-together. Serve store-bought cookies with eggnog and invite family and friends over to help you decorate!
- Inexpensive gift bags purchased from the dollar store are an easy alternative to wrapping gifts.
- Take the hard work out of cleaning by hiring a cleaning company. Remember to reserve as soon as possible as there is much demand for this service over the holidays.
- Hire a high school or university student to help you clean the house. They will appreciate the extra money.



## BREAK WITH FAMILY TRADITIONS

You don't have to do it all! If you have traditionally hosted the Christmas dinner or baked most of the family's Christmas goodies, and found yourself exhausted after the holidays – it is time for a change. Talk to your family and tell them you are breaking with tradition, and explain why. Here are a few changes APAB members have made that you may find helpful:

- Write a list of cooking tasks and delegate those tasks.
- Host a buffet-style dinner where everyone contributes.
- Encourage family and friends to share in the purchase, preparation, and making of holiday meals. Simplify the menu and share the knowledge of your expertise. Do you really need all those appetizers?
- Cook dishes that can be frozen ahead to save time on Christmas day.
- Ask someone else to host the family event this year.
- Consider a cookie exchange with family members and friends. Have each participant bake a large batch of his/her favourite cookie. Then have everyone gather for coffee and divide each batch amongst the participants.
- Instead of baking in large quantities, make smaller batches. Your family and friends may groan, but their waistlines will thank you after the holidays.
- Buy baked goods from local bakeries or grocery stores.
- Instead of a baking marathon, spread it out over time and further enjoy the preparation by inviting a friend or family member to help. Send each helper home with some baked goods.

## TAKE THE “PAIN” OUT OF HOLIDAY SHOPPING

It's hugely satisfying to give someone you care about the perfect gift. Planning is key. Remember, failing to plan is planning to fail. Make a list. To help you avoid coming home empty-handed, include on the list a first choice and a second choice for each person. Easy gift suggestions:

- Many recipients appreciate easy but flexible gifts, such as book vouchers, movie coupons, meal and entertainment vouchers etc. (cash too, is often welcome).
- Give a gift certificate from the intended recipient's favourite store. Not only are they easy to wrap, they will have fun after the holidays picking out exactly what they want.
- Shopping can be hard on the joints, so divide the task. One APAB member makes a separate list for ladies and men. She shops for the ladies' gifts on one trip and the men's gifts on another. When possible, don't venture out into the cold before you have called the stores to check on the availability of items. Make shopping easier by:
  - Avoiding the traffic and crowds by shopping online. Check delivery dates to ensure your gift will arrive on time. If you find the perfect gift online but it can't be delivered before Christmas, print an online photo of the item and slip it and the delivery date into a gift bag or card.
  - If you have a large circle of friends or family to buy for, suggest adults draw a name and buy a present only for that person. Remember to get a price limit. Some families have the person write his/her name on a piece of paper along with a few gift suggestions!

- Review the “Around Town – Shopping” section in this guide. On these pages you will find pointers to help make your holiday shopping a better experience. Pointers such as asking friends to join you when you venture out to shop, especially friends who understand your limitations.

### **MAINTAIN HEALTHY HABITS!**

Take care of your health through good nutrition, restorative rest, and exercise. This will allow you to extract a maximum measure of happiness and pleasure from one of the most joyous times of the year!

**Notes:**

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## NEED ANOTHER COPY?

Additional copies of the Arthritis Lifestyle Management Guide are available. Should you wish to receive your own copy, please contact us at [info@arthritisresearch.ca](mailto:info@arthritisresearch.ca) and provide your full name and mailing address.

Alternatively, you can download a copy of this guide directly from our website, by visiting this link: <https://www.arthritisresearch.ca/lifestyle-management-guide/>



Milan Ilich Arthritis Research Centre | 5591 No. 3 Road, Richmond, BC V6X 2C7 |  
604.207.0400 | Toll Free: 1.844.207.0400  
[arthritisresearch.ca](http://arthritisresearch.ca)