



Osteoarthritis

Protecting the Joints in Your Legs and Feet

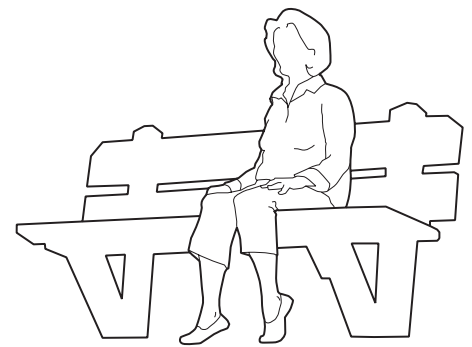
Protecting your joints is important to:

- Reduce joint stress and pain
- Make your daily activities easier to do
- Prevent damage to your joints

How to Protect your Joints:

1. Plan ahead

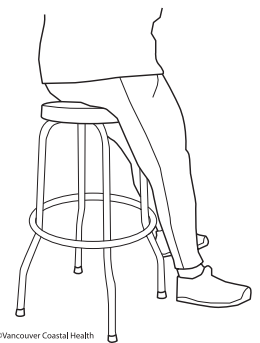
- Plan walks for places where there are benches to sit. Try to rest before your joints hurt.
- Alternate physical activities with rest. Spread out hard tasks over several days, e.g. yard work, housework.
- Take short rest breaks during an activity. Use a timer as a reminder to take a break.
- Use a journal to keep track of how much of an activity you can do comfortably. Planning ahead for rest breaks can help.



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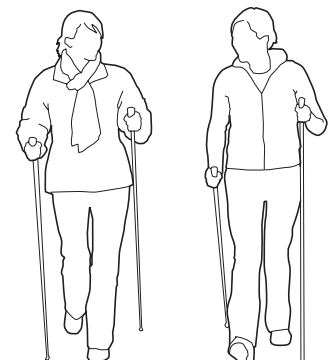
2. Reduce the weight on your joints

- Do not stay in one position for a long period of time.
- Sit to do activities instead of standing, e.g. ironing, gardening, and preparing meals.
- Avoid heavy lifting and carrying. Use light-weight tools, e.g. vacuum.
- Keep your body at a healthy weight by eating a balanced diet and doing regular exercise.



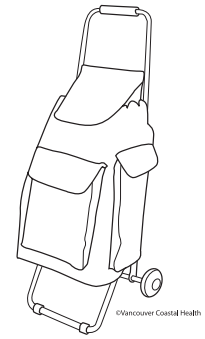
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| Activity: | Try: |
|-----------|---|
| Walking | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Use a walking aid to reduce the stress on your joints, e.g. cane, walker, crutches, or walking poles → Wear shock absorbing shoes. Try gel or silicone insoles. → If your balance isn't a problem, walk on grass or other soft surfaces |



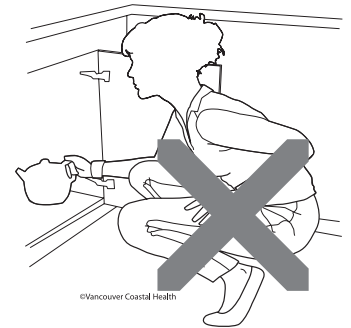
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| Activity: | Try: |
|---|--|
| Grocery shopping, work, running errands | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➔ Use a cart instead of a basket, inside the store ➔ Use a wheeled shopping cart to get items home ➔ Use a wheeled backpack or laptop case ➔ Go through your bag or purse and take out anything you don't need on a daily basis |

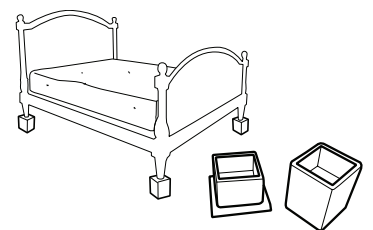


3. Keep your joints in a safe or neutral position.

- Avoid squatting, kneeling or twisting.
- Avoid low seats.
- Change the way your home is set up; items that you use every day should be stored near waist height or in easy reach.
- Use long handled tools, e.g. long-handled reacher, shoehorn.

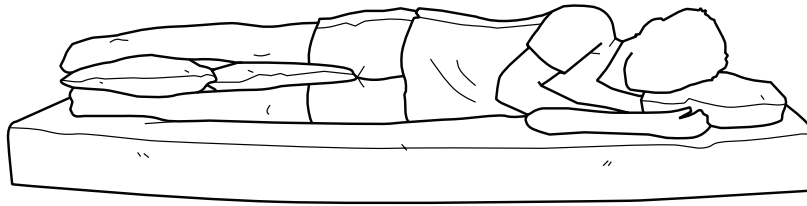


| Activity: | Try: |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Standing up from a seated position | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➔ Use higher chairs or a firm cushion to raise the height of chairs, sofas, and car seats ➔ Use a chair with armrests so that you can use your arms to push up from the chair ➔ To stand, shift to the edge of the seat, place your sore leg straight out in front of the other and push up with your arms |
| Going to the toilet | ➔ Use a raised toilet seat with armrests or install a grab bar next to the toilet |
| Climbing stairs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➔ Avoid climbing stairs when possible ➔ If you have to take the stairs, use the handrail and/or a cane and take one step at a time ➔ Go up the stairs leading with your “good” leg and go down the stairs leading with your “bad” leg |
| Getting out of bed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➔ Raise your bed by putting bed blocks under the legs ➔ Doing gentle movement exercises before you get out of bed can help reduce stiffness |
| Cleaning | ➔ Use long-handled tools. |



4. Reduce stress on your joints while sleeping

- Sleep on a firm mattress. Add a piece of foam or sheepskin on top of your mattress if you want more cushioning.
- When lying on your side, use a pillow between your legs. This helps to support your hips and low back in a good position.

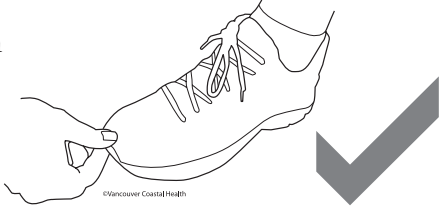
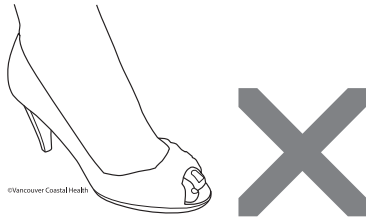
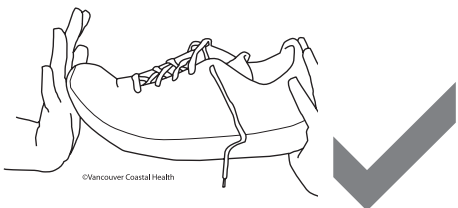




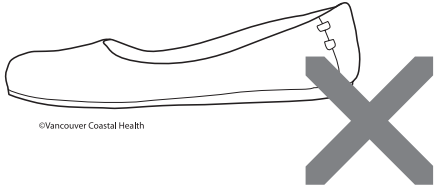
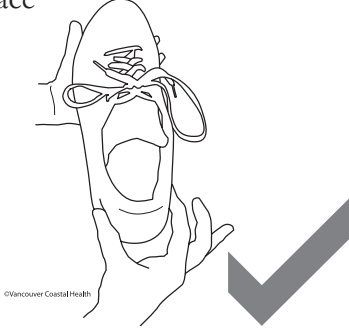
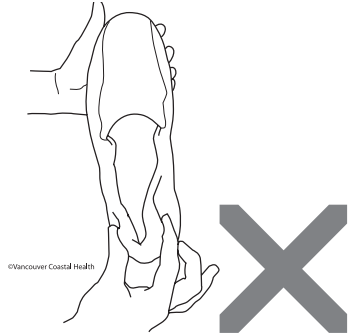

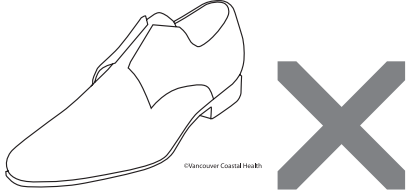
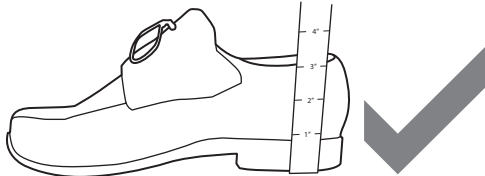

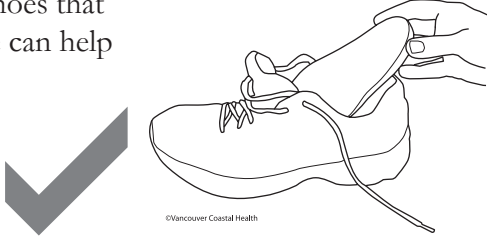
5. Follow the exercises given to you by your health care team to keep your joints moving and your muscles strong.

Listen to your body – if you have bad arthritis, it can be normal for more activity to cause a small increase in joint pain. If the pain doesn't go away within 2 hours of stopping the activity, it means you have done too much. Don't stop being active entirely, just do a little less next time or change the way you do the activity.

6. Choose comfort shoes

- Look for these things when buying new shoes:

| GOOD: | BAD: |
|--|--|
| <p>→ Space for your foot - your toes should not be squeezed or touch the end of the shoe as you walk</p>  <p>©Vancouver Coastal Health</p> |  <p>©Vancouver Coastal Health</p> |
| <p>→ Stiff sole</p>  <p>©Vancouver Coastal Health</p> |  <p>©Vancouver Coastal Health</p> |

| GOOD: | BAD: |
|---|---|
| <p>→ Rocker sole</p> <p>→ If your balance is poor, talk to your health care team for advice</p>  |  |
| <p>→ Firm heel cup that keeps your heel in place</p>  |  |
| <p>→ Soft, comfortable material on the top of the shoe</p>  |  |
| <p>→ Low heel height of 3/4" – 1"</p>  |  |
| <p>→ Soft, comfortable insole. If you wear orthotics, look for shoes that come with a removable insole. An extra gel or foam insole can help to absorb shock in regular dress shoes.</p>  | |

- Replace shoes at least once a year, more often if you wear them regularly.
- Wear comfort shoes indoors if you are doing a lot of standing and walking.

For more information, please visit oasis.vch.ca

For more copies, go online at <http://vch.eduhealth.ca>
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