Arthritis Management

About arthritis
Arthritis is a very common condition that causes:

- fatigue
- pain
- swelling
- stiffness in one or more joints.

Arthritis mainly affects a person’s:

- knees and hips
- neck and back
- feet
- hands.

The word ‘arthritis’ literally means ‘inflammation of the joint’.

Protecting your joints
Pain can be your body warning you about too much stress on joints.

You may need to stop what you are doing, rest more often or change the activity (for example allow dishes to air dry rather than wiping them).

It is best to use larger, stronger body joints and muscles when you can. For example, you might use both hands to carry a shopping bag or carry it on your forearm.

Free information is available from the Independent Living Centre (ILC) on Energy Conservation. The information may be helpful in assisting you to manage your arthritis.

How the Independent Living Centre can help you
We have Occupational Therapists who can discuss with you the activities that you find difficult and offer information on other ways you can get things done.

If you would like to visit our equipment display, we can make an appointment for you to view and trial a large range of items that may be of use. There is no pressure to buy because we are not a sales outlet. If you like an item, we will give you some information on where it is available and the price you are likely to pay. This information is also available from the Independent Living Centre national equipment database at www.ilcaustralia.org.au.

Listed below are some items that may help you to manage a variety of everyday tasks. We have many of these items on display.
**Household tasks**

- Utensils with a built-up handle may be easier to grasp (for example specifically designed vegetable peelers, cutlery, cooking spatulas). Tubular foam or lightweight slip-on handles can be added to a range of items to build up the handle (such as cutlery, hairbrushes, toothbrushes).
- A ‘kettle tipper’ allows you to pour from a standard kettle without having to lift it. You might also like to try bringing a small bottle/jug of water to the kettle for filling, rather than carrying a full kettle back from the sink.
- Jar openers, bottle openers and can openers, including ring-pull can openers are designed to use larger muscles and put less stress on smaller joints. Electric or battery-operated jar and can openers are also available and require minimal effort from the user.
- Ergonomic knives with angled handles are useful when cutting and slicing.
- Tap turners, silicone grips and lever-style taps can provide better grip and leverage.
- Doorknob grippers or non-slip matting may make it easier to grasp and turn round doorknobs.
- A ‘pick-up reacher’ is a long-handed stick with a claw at the end that enables you to pick up lightweight objects from the floor or unreachable heights.
- Plastic plug pullers help pull electric plugs out of their close-fitting sockets.
- Trolleys such as tray mobiles can make moving heavy objects within the house easier.
- Key turners give better grip and leverage on keys.
- Lightweight plastic, rubber and foam grips for pens and pencils aid grasp.
- Spring-action scissors require less pressure and less involvement of the thumb to operate.

**Dressing**

- Clothing that pulls on without fastenings, or at least has the fastenings at the front, is generally easier to manage. We can give you suggestions on replacing some buttons, press-studs or hook-and-eye fastenings with hook-and-loop tape.
- Bras without fastenings are available.
- Button hooks and zip pullers are often useful.
- A dressing stick can help you pull up underwear or pants, or help you remove them over your feet from a seated position.
- Sock and stocking aids help you reach the sock or stocking to the foot and then pull it up.
- Slippers that open up flat make it easier to place your foot in. They close with hook-and-loop tape fastenings and are available with non-slip rubber soles.
- A long-handled shoehorn may help you put on your shoes.
Personal care

- Pill splitters, pill crushers and medicine organisers help you to get the right dose at the right time.
- An angled, long-handled brush, washing sponge or bottom-wiper can help with personal hygiene tasks, particularly if you have restricted neck or shoulder movements.

Recreation

- Lightweight, long-handled and adapted garden tools are available.
- A card holder will allow you to look at your playing cards and select one without having to hold the cards in your hand.
- Book holders support a book, whilst you are in a chair or bed. Tablets or iPads may be lighter to hold than a book. The texts for a wide range of books can be downloaded from the internet.

Resources from Arthritis SA (incorporating Osteoporosis SA)

Arthritis SA have a wide range of information sheets available about living with arthritis and how to manage symptoms.

You can contact the Arthritis SA at:
118 Richmond Road, Marleston SA 5033
Phone: 8379 5711 or 1800 011 041 (country callers)
Email: info@arthritissa.org.au
Website: www.arthritissa.org.au

Contacting the Independent Living Centre

For further information or to make an appointment to visit the display please contact the Independent Living Centre. The Independent Living Centre offers free advice on equipment and techniques to help you with everyday tasks.

Independent Living Centre
11 Blacks Road
Gilles Plains SA 5086
Phone: 1300 885 886 (SA & NT callers only) or 8266 5260
Email: ilcsa@.sa.gov.au
Website: www.sa.gov.au/disability/ilc

Accessible off street parking is available. Bus services run nearby. Call 8210 1000 for timetable information.