Joint Protection For Osteoarthritis

Joint protection involves doing your everyday activities and work with as little strain and stress to arthritic joints as possible.

The way you use your body in “normal” ways will often put stress on joints that are affected by arthritis. By using joint protection methods, you may reduce pain, save energy and prevent unnecessary strain to joints while still being as active as possible.

Respect pain
Be aware of pain. It is a signal from your body that there is more stress on a joint than there should be. Locate where you hurt and what brought on the pain. Look at the position of joints during activities that are painful and try to place the joint in a less stressful position next time. If joint pain lasts longer than one hour after an activity, reduce the effort or amount of work you put into the activity or change your way of doing the activity so that it does not cause pain.

Balance rest and work
The extra effort you need to do your work and activities, along with the pain you feel, can be tiring. Depending on how you feel, you may need larger amounts of rest. Brief rest periods during the day, particularly for the affected, painful joints, may be very helpful. Allow a painful joint to rest using a splint if one was prescribed for you.

Use positions that do not tend to be stressful to involved joints
In osteoarthritis, the small joints of the fingers and the base of the thumb are usually affected. Try to limit stress on these joints by avoiding tight gripping and pinching. Use the palm of your hand and open fingers to hold objects. Use adaptive equipment to help take stress off joints during daily activities.

Change positions often so as to avoid one position for a long period of time
When you keep your arms, hands, legs or other joints in the same position for a long time, the joints become stiff and muscles strained and tired. Avoid staying in the same position such as standing or gripping, for a long period of time.

Use stronger muscles and larger joints for a job
Larger joints and muscles can take more stress and weight than smaller ones. Using small joints again and again puts more stress on them and may lead to deformity. Try to spread the strain and weight over several joints. This helps you use each part of your body to its best advantage.