

# Occupational Therapy Toolkit

## Rheumatoid Arthritis

### **Functional Limitations:**

ADL, IADL, work and leisure impairment  
Functional mobility impairment  
Limited activity tolerance and endurance  
Limited ROM  
Impaired strength  
Impaired grip and pinch strength  
Joint deformity and instability  
Joint pain and swelling  
Impaired hand function, manipulation and dexterity  
Depression  
Morning stiffness > 1 hour  
Fatigue, malaise  
Fall risk  
Environmental barriers  
Other symptoms and conditions - carpal tunnel syndrome, cervical myelopathy

### **Occupational Therapy Intervention:**

ADL, IADL, work and leisure training including but not limited to...

Train in the use of adaptive equipment to

- Improves grasp (built-ups)
- Compensate for range of motion loss (dress stick, reacher)
- Improves ease of performance (electric can opener, raised toilet seat)
- Prevent stress on joints (lever door handle)
- Prevent prolonged grasp (book holder, Dycem)
- Compensate for weak/absent muscle (u-cuff, jar opener)
- Prevent accidents (bath seat, nonskid rugs)

Ergonomic workstation equipment (voice-activated computer software, forearm rests)

Education on energy conservation, joint protection with application to ADL's

Instruct in activity balancing

Functional mobility training

Train in proper transfer techniques and bed mobility skills as they relate to ADL and IADL tasks

Instruct in safe walker use and transporting items (walker bag or tray)

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Instruct in joint protection, body mechanics and posture

- Positioning devices for bed and chair

- Promote functional positioning of joints at risk

Provide UE, neck and trunk therapeutic activities and exercises to improve ROM and strength

- Acute flare-ups - instruct in performing gentle range of motion exercises 3-4 times daily followed by icing for 15 minutes

- For non acute joints - instruct in the use of superficial heat, gentle isometric strengthening in pain free range

Provide splints to rest inflamed joints, maintain proper joint alignment, improve functional control and support weak or painful joints

Instruct in pain management techniques

- Educate about pain cycle

- Encourage follow-through of exercise program, relaxation techniques and joint protection techniques

- Instruct in coordinating medication peak with exercise and activity

- Educate in the use of superficial heat and cold

- Provide modalities (paraffin, ultrasound and iontophoresis)

Assess home safety and functional safety and provide environmental modifications and adaptations

Educate regarding falls risk and prevention strategies

Assist in developing self-management skills (effective communication, positive coping strategies, stress reduction, physical activity and exercise, medication management, healthy eating, and making informed decisions about medical and alternative treatments)

Educate patient and caregivers about rheumatoid arthritis, the availability of community resources and encourage participation in support groups

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## Rheumatoid Arthritis

### **Patient Education:**

1. Energy Conservation Principles
2. Energy Conservation with Self Care Activities
3. Energy Conservation with Meal and Home Management
4. Joint Protection Principles
5. Upper Body Active ROM Exercises for Arthritis
6. Splint Instructions
7. Stress Management and Relaxation Techniques
8. Superficial Heat
9. Superficial Cold
10. Falls Risks Assessment and Prevention Strategies
11. Home Safety and Functional Safety Assessment
12. Deep Breathing Exercise

### **Therapist Resources:**

1. Arthritic Joint Changes and Deformity
2. Splinting for Arthritis
3. Surgical Intervention in Arthritis