

Resource

## Useful tips

There are many products available to help people with rheumatoid arthritis to go about normal day-to-day activities with less pain, exertion or strain on joints. We asked some of our Members to talk about useful products (either bought or homemade) and other innovations that they had found helpful.

[Print](#)



There are many products available to help people with rheumatoid arthritis to go about normal day-to-day activities with less pain, exertion or strain on joints. We asked some of our Members to talk about useful products (either bought or homemade) and other innovations that they had found helpful, and a number of their suggestions are listed below.

## In the bathroom:

- To dry yourself after a bath, use a microfibre towel, which is light, absorbent and will easily bend into creases and underarms.
- An electric toothbrush is a lot easier on the wrist and hand to clean teeth properly.?
- Put rubber bands around your toothbrush handle, so it doesn't slip through stiff fingers in the morning.?
- Use cotton buds to dry between the toes, or make a foot and between toes washer by cutting a fly-swat down a little and sewing a flannel over the end piece.?
- For extra grip on rails in your bathroom, cover rails with cycle tape, available in many colours from Halfords etc.?
- A towelling dressing gown can absorb a lot of water after a bath or shower.?
- Get someone to stitch the two short sides of two bath towels together, leaving a hole for your head. Useful when the shoulders won't allow free movements to put on a conventional robe, but you need to get dry AND stay decent.?
- If you have problems squeezing shampoo and conditioner bottles, buy empty soap dispensers, fill with shampoo or conditioner and label.?
- Have lever taps fitted by social services / O.T. or purchase from DIY store?
- On mornings when hands are stiff and sore, fill the hand-basin with some nice warm soapy water or apply baby oil and move and massage your hands around in the water.

## In the kitchen:

- Wring a dishcloth by winding it around the tap and then crossing the 2 ends over each other and twisting, or use a sponge, which can be much easier to squeeze than a cloth when washing up.
- Fill kettle by using a lightweight plastic jug and only use minimal amount of water.?
- Use nut-crackers (the type with inside serrations) to unscrew small bottle tops.?
- When cutting raw vegetables, e.g. potatoes, make the knife two-handed by having a 3" x ¾" piece of wood with a slot cut in it, into which to slide the end of the knife. Cut by pressing with the heel of hands in a rocking motion.?
- Kitchen knives with the 'saw-like' handles can make cutting much easier.
- To remove heavy items from oven, place a trolley beside the oven and lift item with two hands onto it, then do a second lift onto work surface (metal trolley is preferable due to risk of burning or marking wooden trolley).?
- To line a tin with foil – mould the foil over the upturned tin and bend in the corners, remove and press lightly into tin.?
- When cutting dried fruit, e.g. apricots use scissors, rather than a knife, to make the job much easier.?
- You can get beautiful sets of plastic or bamboo crockery and cutlery when normal crockery is too heavy to hold.?
- Boil in the bag or microwavable rice is much easier to prepare—no need to drain or ask anyone else to drain it.?
- To crush garlic, place the clove in a polythene bag and bash it with a rolling pin, and crush with the heel of the hand. Alternatively, use a tube of garlic paste, garlic granules or a bottle of

concentrated garlic.?

- Or instead of using a traditional garlic press, try a 'Garlic Twist'. The Garlic Twist will mince anything from garlic and ginger to nuts and olives into fine pieces without waste.?
- To open cream/yoghurt cartons – cut down with a knife around the inside edge of the carton rather than attempt to peel back the lid.?
- Use a steamer or microwavable packs for cooking vegetables instead of lots of saucepans as there is no weight involved when draining the vegetables.?
- Instead of trying to pick up a heavy pan of potatoes or other veg to drain, put a metal colander inside the saucepan so that you only need to pick up the colander and veg—no danger of covering yourself with boiling water.?
- When having problems with a corkscrew, put a fork or any long cutlery through the handle of the corkscrew.?
- Buy a mixer for any baking /whisking.?
- Buy prepared vegetables from the supermarket if preparing vegetables for dinner is difficult or tiring.?
- Buy a small round rubber disc in a kitchen shop (about a hand's width in diameter) designed for opening jars.
- If you have a baby and use bottles, release the air by pressing the teat down, which makes the bottle easier to open.?
- If you have trouble spreading butter on toast, melt some butter or spread in the microwave in a little cream jug, then just pour it over the toast slowly to distribute it as evenly as you can.?
- When peeling potatoes, you can hold the potato in place by piercing with a fork and then holding in place with the fork handle.?
- Slip some pipe lagging (the spongy sort available from most DIY stores) over the handles of knives and forks to make holding them easier.
- A commercially available "contour turner" gadget can help with turning, e.g. radiator taps, oven knobs. ?
- Battery operated jar lid removers make light work of opening stiff jars.

Getting dressed:

- Replace awkward buttons with Velcro (if you have to dress young children you may want to do this for some of their clothes as well).?
- Long-handled shoe horns and elastic laces help when putting on footwear.?
- If you want to wear tights when going to the chiropodist, cut off the toes and wear these so that there is no need to undress.?
- A piece of ribbon or loop of elastic tied to a zip fastener can make it easier to grip to pull up and down.?
- A set of fold away steps on each level of your house can help you to get to the top shelves in cupboards & wardrobes.?

- You can buy coiled shoelaces if you find lacing your shoes to be fiddly.?
- Some people find silky pyjamas (or sheets) useful in bed, as it can make it easier for them to move during the night, which can help to stop them from waking.?
- A jacket/coat with silky lining can help tender wrists slip through the sleeves easily without too much pain.

#### Driving:

- With thin driving gloves, contact with the steering wheel is much improved so no need to grip so hard.?
- If you do not have leather seats in your car, place a silk scarf or plastic bag on the driver or passenger seat of your car, and you will swivel with ease when getting in or out.?
- A seatbelt extension makes seatbelts much easier to use and easier to handle. Sheepskin seatbelt pads take the pressure off sensitive bones, making them a lot more comfortable to use.
- Before buying a new car, make sure you can fill it up with petrol. Some petrol stations will offer help for disabled drivers, but this isn't always easy to request. Make sure you can open and close the petrol cap. A commercially available "contour turner" gadget can help do this.

#### Housework:

- Use a clean dish mop as a duster for working in awkward corners and behind furniture. It saves moving heavy items.?
- Use a wooden spatula to tuck in sheets or use fitted sheets that do not require tucking in.?
- Use a lightweight hand-held vacuum when cleaning stairs and upholstery.?
- Try a 'window cleaning vacuum', very light to use, and you even can use it for getting condensation off windows in the morning. It would be worth shopping around for the best price.

#### General tips:

- To turn a key, place a skewer through the hole in the key to provide leverage.?
- If you have difficulty in pinching the ends of clothes pegs together, use the "push-on" type.?
- Buy plugs with handles for your most frequently used plugs. Some electrical goods suppliers will change the plugs on new items free of charge.?
- Or invest in some 'Plug Tugs' which attach easily to ordinary electrical plugs and provide a secure loop that enables the user to grip them. Available from most household aids shops.
- To stop wrist ache, wear an elasticised woollen sports wrist band (sold in pairs).?
- Use "Crufts" dog lead. It has a padded handle. Useful if walking the dog on a less good day. A harness can also stop dogs from pulling so hard on a lead.
- Use a grabber to pull on clothes, dry between your toes, pick up leaves in the garden, pull a magazine or paper towards you, get items out of cupboards, etc.?
- To help you to pace yourself, try using a weekly planner diary to plan in activities using a traffic lights system, with red for an activity you will find tiring, and green for more simple or enjoyable, and amber in between. That way, you can make sure that you do not have too many 'red' activities on the same day.?

- Trolleys or plastic boxes on wheels, which fold when not in use can have many uses, such as carrying in shopping from the car, or carrying laundry in the house etc.?
- Medication can be decanted into different containers at some chemists if you have problems opening the standard packaging.?
- Keep spares of key items, such as hairbrush, deodorant, toothbrush, toothpaste, face wipes, etc. downstairs, for days when stairs can be a struggle.?
- Use a shopping bag with long handles so that you can carry shopping over your shoulder to save hand joints.?
- Use 2 rubber-tipped pencils if you have trouble typing with painful hands/fingers. Wrap rubber bands around the lead end to aid holding and type with the rubber ends.?
- If you need to make an extended handle for your hairbrush, gardening tools, duster etc. get someone to go to the local DIY with said item and look for some plastic tubing that will fit over the handle snugly. Attach the two together and if slightly slack apply some Silicone Adhesive (available from local craft shop and can be used for all sorts of jobs) and allow 24hrs to set.?
- Use a piece of cord to slip onto door handles, so that you can pull them closed as you go through.?
- An electric 'under-blanket' for your bed can be useful to soothe aching, stiff joints, particularly in the morning before you've got out of bed.?
- You can buy 'wheat bags' that are microwaveable to soothe joint pain, or could make your own, by filling an old sock with wheat or rice and herbs and tying the end up.?
- If bending down to pick up the mail is painful or difficult, fit a mail-catcher to the inside of your door, under the mailbox.?
- Use masking tape to wrap around lids that are smooth and shiny to get better grip.?
- If holding your telephone for a long time can be painful or difficult, you can purchase a telephone headset, but must make sure that your telephone is set up for a headset to be plugged into it.?
- Use a pepper cellar to sprinkle small seeds on to the ground when planting. Much easier on the fingers and ensures you can spread them more evenly.

NRAS would like to thank all the Members who contributed to the above top tips and will be happy to receive further tips by email at? [enquiries@nras.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@nras.org.uk)

Gadgets designed to help around the home etc. are available from many organisations. Below are some that have been successfully used by Members:

Spring Chicken: ? [shop.springchicken.co.uk/](http://shop.springchicken.co.uk/)

NRS Healthcare: ? [www.nrshealthcare.co.uk](http://www.nrshealthcare.co.uk)

Updated: 03/06/2019