



# Osteoarthritis - Protecting Your Shoulders

The safest position for your shoulders is:

- → Upper arms relaxed by your sides
- → Shoulder blades back & down
- → Chin tucked with your head balanced over your body

### Important points to remember:

- Respect pain. Pain is your body telling you that you need to take a break, find a new way of doing the activity, or avoid it all together.
- Avoid holding your arms in a raised position away from your body for prolonged periods of time.
- Avoid repetitive arm movements, especially back and forth. I.e. Scrubbing the floor, brushing teeth etc.
- Avoid weight-bearing through your arms; use a high firm chair, or a raised toilet seat, so that you don't need to push up through your arms to stand.

Be aware of your shoulder position in all daily activities:

## 1. Sleeping

- Avoid lying on the painful shoulder or with that arm tucked under a pillow
  - o If you can't tolerate lying on your back, use a pillow under one side of your back for "3/4" lying
- When lying on your back or other side, support your painful arm on a pillow

#### 2. Household activities

- Use a step stool or long-handled reacher to avoid reaching above shoulder height
- Use light-weight tools i.e. light vacuum, aluminum frying pan instead of cast iron etc.
- Crouch or stoop before reaching to pick up an item from the floor
- Avoid twisting and awkward positions, such as reaching for objects in the back seat of a car from the front seat.
- Store regularly used items between thigh and shoulder height
  - o Store heavy items around waist height
  - o Carry heavy items close to your body, supporting the weight against your body
  - o Use a wheeled cart or office chair to move heavy items





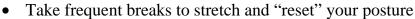


### 3. Dressing

- Dress the painful arm first. Undress the better arm first.
- Wear loose-fitting clothing
- Wear front-closing shirts and bras or do the bra up in the front and then twist it around

### 4. Computer & desk set-up

- Move the phone to your better side to avoid reaching with the painful arm
  - Avoid holding the phone between your neck and shoulder
  - o If you must use the phone for prolonged periods, consider a hands-free head set
- Keep regularly used items within easy reach
- Raise the computer monitor to a height where your eyes line up with the top 1/3 of the screen
- Adjust your chair and/or keyboard tray so that you can type and mouse with your elbows bent to about 90° and your upper arms relaxed by your sides



- o Bring your shoulder blades down and back as if they are tucked in pockets on your back
- o Chin tucked; an imaginary string is pulling you straight up from the top of your head
- o Use your chair armrests to support your arms when you take a break from typing



Activity:	Try:
Brushing hair	→ Buy a long-handled brush or comb
Drying hair	→ Use a hook to hang the blow-dryer or get a blow-dryer stand so that you don't have to hold it constantly
Applying make-up, shaving etc.	→ Use your "good" arm to support the weight of the sore arm
Brushing teeth	→ Use an electric toothbrush to avoid repetitive back & forth motion
Getting out of bed	→ Use your abdominal muscles to sit up, instead of pushing up with your arms
Driving	→ Keep your hands below the "3 o'clock" and "9 o'clock" positions on the steering wheel when driving
Bathing	→ Use a long-handled sponge to reach your back







