

Patient information

Living with Arthritis and Caring for a Baby

Occupational Therapy - Therapies Department

Living with arthritis can bring challenges in many aspects of your life. When caring for your baby there can be lots to consider.

Below are some suggestions on how to make life a little easier, there is often more than one approach to take. You will also find your own solutions as you go along.

Daily tasks when caring for a baby:

- **Be organised.** This can be helpful in making your life easier when caring for a baby, planning ahead and prioritising.
- To minimise going up and down the stairs frequently, it is a good idea to have available items that you use regularly on both levels of your home. For example have a Moses basket up/downstairs, a duplicate nappy bag and changes of clothes.
- Ensure that you consider your own needs, for example, keep a drink or snack upstairs or if you use any assistive devices, like a helping hand - have one available on both levels.
- **Try before you buy** when you are choosing baby equipment. There are many factors to consider when selecting and buying expensive items of baby equipment such as prams, cots, and car seats.

Investing your time finding out what is available and physically trying the equipment is an important process to go through, to be able to make the right decision.

Lifting and carrying:

- There are alternative lifting techniques your therapist can demonstrate to you which should ease the stresses on your joints.
- As your baby gets bigger you may choose to use baby carriers/ slings. Should you decide to use a carrier/ sling, always check out the ease of positioning the carrier both on baby and on yourself. The fastenings can also be difficult to manage so it is a good idea to practice before you buy.
- Going up and down the stairs may be difficult especially in the mornings. Sometimes it may be necessary to ask for assistance to carry your baby.

Bathing:

- If this is a task that proves challenging it may be an area of caring for your child where you decide to use available support or assistance from friends or family, especially when lifting baby in/out of the bath.
- When your baby is newborn it is advisable to bathe your child in a plastic bath positioned at a safe level for you to avoid bending over too much.
- As your baby grows there are various bathing seats that can be used to support your baby in the bath.
- If you have the flexibility of time, it is a good idea to select the time of day when your joints are less painful.

Changing:

- It is important to position yourself safely when changing your baby.
- Always have the items you need ready and prepared before you start changing your baby, so they are within easy reach.
- The small fastenings like the poppers on body suits can be really difficult to manage, so consider the alternatives such as stretchy material with Velcro, elastic, or zips where possible. Try before you buy.

Feeding:

- It is a good idea where possible, to have an armchair next to the cot to reduce the need for you to carry your baby far in the night when they wake.
- When feeding your baby consider your own posture and support for your baby. There are various supportive cushions available that should improve your comfort and reduce joint strain from supporting the full weight of your baby.
- Make use of available assistive devices that can reduce joint strain for any preparation of bottles or food, such as non-slip mat/ cones.

Playing:

- Stay focused on the positive things you can do with your baby and find alternative ways of enjoying playtime together. Playtime with your baby doesn't always have to be active, alternative suggestions include e.g., reading, listening to music, and singing.
- It is important to consider your own postures when playing with your baby. Use activity gyms for babies or a playpen with a safe opening to avoid you bending over and lifting.
- Consider ways you can make the task easier, e.g., using a helping hand to pick toys from the floor, plastic storage boxes on wheels for their toys.

If you have any further questions about any of the above or would like to discuss in more detail, please ask your therapist for more information.

Feedback

Your feedback is important to us and helps us influence care in the future.

Following your discharge from hospital or attendance at your outpatient appointment you will receive a text asking if you would recommend our service to others. Please take the time to text back, you will not be charged for the text and can opt out at any point. Your co-operation is greatly appreciated.

Further information

Occupational Therapy Service

Royal and Broadgreen Hospitals

Tel: 0151 706 2760

Text phone number: 18001 0151 706 2760

Aintree Hospital

Tel: 0151 529 8047

Text phone number: 18001 0151 529 8047

Versus Arthritis

Helpline Tel number: 08005200520

www.versusarthritis.org

National Rheumatoid Arthritis Society (NRAS)

Freephone number: 0800 298 7650

www.nras.org.uk

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