



OSTEOARTHRITIS OF THE THUMB

Osteoarthritis of the thumb is a common condition, usually affecting the joints at the base of the thumb. It is a degenerative condition, influenced by overloading the joint in work or daily activities. There is often a family history of similar arthritic problems. Wear and tear on the joint results in pain, deformity, and impaired function of the hand.

- **Decreasing Pain**

- A – Splints to rest the joint, maintain the web space, prevent deformity and assist in daily activities
- B – Use of heat and/or ice. Go with what works.
- C – Physiotherapy treatments
- D – Oral anti-inflammatory medication as prescribed by your physician
- E – Topical anti-inflammatory creams as prescribed by your physician
- F – Injection, on physician's recommendation

- **Joint Protection**

Modification of daily activities can often prevent the progression of arthritis, and avoid contractures or deformities.

- A – Restrict “ pinch” positions, either forcefully or repetitively.
- B – Wear the recommended splint as prescribed
- C – Build up handles on tools and utensils (eg. kitchen utensils, thick pens, ergonomic garden and carpentry tools, padded steering wheel covers, etc.)
- D – Commercial assists are available to purchase, to aid in removal of jar or bottle tops, or open cans.
Use uninvolved hand if possible.
Avoid strong grasp or pinch.
- E – Use doorknobs/taps with levers if possible
- F – Use two hands to grasp heavy objects (eg: pots, laundry)
- G – Wring out wet cloth by wrapping around the faucet and twisting the cloth with both hands or with one hand.

- **Exercises to maintain motion and strength for pinch and grasp as prescribed by your therapist.**