



Making life easier

- There are many aids and equipment available to help you if you have difficulty with everyday tasks or your work
- An occupational therapist can advise you on useful gadgets that can help make your life easier

Being diagnosed with arthritis or a musculoskeletal condition can be life changing. Simple daily tasks can become difficult and painful, while managing family life and juggling work can be exhausting.

There are a variety of aids, gadgets and other equipment available to help you manage your pain. They can also help reduce stress on your muscles and joints, save energy, prevent fatigue and basically make your life easier.

Aids and equipment can help you with everything from cooking, cleaning, bathing, writing, mobility, technology and driving.

You may be able to modify some objects that you already own – e.g. if you have sore hands, foam tubing can be used to create an easier grip on your pens.

Or you may need special equipment for specific situations – e.g. tap turners to help you turn the water tap on or off, pick-up reachers to help you pick items up off the floor, or grab rails beside the bath/shower to help you get in and out of the tub.

Some of these items can be made by a home handy person or you can buy them from medical suppliers, pharmacies, hardware or other stores.

If installation is required, a competent home handy person can sometimes do the job, but local tradies and sometimes local councils can also arrange installation. Grab rails, bath seats and other aids must be properly installed or else they're dangerous!

Occupational therapists

The range of aids, equipment and other gadgets available is enormous, so you might want to speak with an occupational therapist (OT) to get specific information and advice.

OTs work in the public and private sectors. You can access them through public and private hospitals, community health centres, vocational rehabilitation centres, independent living centres and private practice.

As well as helping you with aids and equipment, OTs can help you learn better ways to do everyday activities to help you:

- protect your joints
- reduce the pain caused by doing certain activities
- save energy.

They can also provide advice about pacing your day and activities so you can achieve a balance between activity and rest.

Common aids and equipment

Aids and equipment commonly used by people with arthritis and musculoskeletal conditions are:

- bathroom grips or rails to assist you getting in and out of a shower or bath
- raised toilet seats to make standing up easier
- cutlery with thick handles for easy grip
- buttonhooks to fasten buttons
- long handled combs and brushes
- long handled shoe horns to help put on shoes
- large handled items such as can openers, gardening shears, scissors
- walking aids - cane, walking stick or frame
- swivel seat cushion to help you get in and out of the car
- modified computer keyboard and mouse.

This is a very small list to help you understand some of the options available that can assist you. There are many more aids and equipment available to suit specific tasks and activities.



Independent Living Centre

OTs at the Independent Living Centre are available for consultation and provide information and displays to help you decide on suitable aids. Although you can drop in at any time, it's preferred that people call the telephone enquiry service beforehand. This is a free service and can be contacted by calling 1300 885 886.

State-wide Equipment Program (SWEP)

You may be eligible for assistance with the cost of aids through a government aids and equipment scheme through the Victorian State-wide Equipment Program. This can sometimes help with the cost of aids such as wheelchairs or alterations to bathrooms.

You should talk to your GP or OT about this program and about your eligibility. It's important to note that there may be a long wait for items available through this scheme.

Solve Disability Solutions

Sometimes your need for equipment can't be met commercially and you may need equipment modified or custom-made. Solve Disability Solutions (formerly TADVIC) is a not-for-profit organisation that makes and modifies equipment needs for people with a disability.

Where to get help

- Your doctor
- Occupational therapist
- Musculoskeletal Australia
MSK Help Line: 1800 263 265

How we can help

Call our MSK Help Line and speak to our nurses. Phone 1800 263 265 or email helpline@msk.org.au.

We can help you find out more about:

- arthritis and musculoskeletal conditions
- ways to live well with these conditions
- managing your pain
- upcoming webinars, seminars and other events.

More to explore

- Occupational Therapy Australia
www.otaus.com.au
- Independent Living Centre
- <http://ilcaustralia.org.au>
- Solve Disability Solutions www.solve.org.au
- State-wide Equipment Program (SWEP)
<https://swep.bhs.org.au>
- Arthritis Research UK
www.arthritisresearchuk.org
- Better Health Channel
www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au

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