A Simple Splint for RA Can Make a Difference

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Could a Splint to Improve Comfort Benefit You?

The pain and discomfort felt in the joints are mostly caused by the inflammation associated with rheumatoid arthritis. Besides adopting a healthy life style, including diet and exercise, and taking your medications, you can also consider using a splint.

Why splints help

A splint will help your joint work less, and rest more, as it decreases the range of motion of that joint. Splints are designed to help your joint be more mobile, yet still supported and protected by them. We often forget how much we use the small joints of the hands and feet, which are most commonly affected by RA, unless we experience pain and inflammation in those joints. Luckily, splints are now available to everyone, inexpensive, easy to use and you can choose the one that suits your needs.

Which splint do you need?

Decades ago there weren't many options available; however, now we have many different splints available on the market. Some of them are lighter and flexible, which allows your joint to still work, and improve your range of motion. Others are heavier and larger, used for the purpose of keeping the joint fixed (immobile) so the joint and muscles can rest. Below are some of the splints you should consider:

Working splints

Working splints are designed for hands and wrists with the purpose of holding your hand and wrist in the proper position. They give your hand support, while allowing you to perform day to day activities such as using your computer, cooking, eating, getting dressed and more. A working sprint makes it easier on your joints while protecting them, increasing your grip strength, and overall reducing or preventing wrist and finger pains.

You can wear a working sprint at all times—during activities that cause you more pain, when your joints feel painful and weak, when you work and when you drive.

A popular splint for the wrist is a wrap around splint made of a stretchy material, which has a metal bar inserted in a pocket on the palm side of the wrist. The metal bar keeps the wrist in a more comfortable and proper position.

Resting splints

Resting splints are usually used at night to provide support and rest to the joints. These sprints can help decrease the pain and inflammation and support the joint in the proper position while sleeping. Resting splints are particularly helpful during a flare up both during the day and night. They are available in various forms, but they

are typically heavier and larger, made out of plastic or less flexible materials.

Where can you order a splint?

See an occupational therapist or a physiotherapist first, to help you choose the best splint for your needs. The healthcare professional can order it for you, or suggest a store where you can buy it from. Beside advising which splint to buy and how to use it, the OT or physio can also put together an exercise program, which should be used daily, to improve the joint function and strength.