

## *ABILITY* -- not disability

# Rheumatoid Arthritis

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Homemaking can be a most creative and satisfying activity, but after the onslaught of rheumatoid arthritis or stiffening from the disease, a homemaker may find it impossible to do some tasks without pain and frustration. With rheumatoid arthritis, proper planning is essential to prevent overtiring, yet exercise is essential. Simple homemaking chores—done correctly—can provide exercise and be good therapy for joints and muscles.

### Storage

Eliminate all unnecessary equipment in the kitchen. Only a fraction of the utensils kept in the average kitchen are used frequently.

Survey what is available or can be ordered from your local hardware store. Special shelves and equipment can be made at home, but often these devices can be bought inexpensively. Equipment easily found in hardware stores includes:

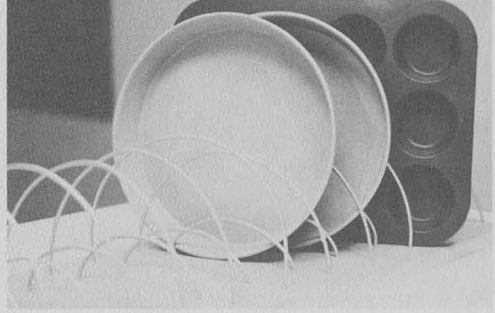
Pull-out drawers—bring equipment and staples from the back shelves to within easy reach.

Lazy-Susans—come in all sizes and can be used in refrigerators or cupboards for equipment or staples. Simply turning them around brings things closer.

Pop-up mixer tables—can be ordered from a lumber or hardware store. These allow a large mixer to be stored in a lower cupboard and to “pop” up with just the slightest pull of the hand, similar to the way an old-fashioned desk typewriter stand pops into place.

Drawer dividers—keep silverware and utensils organized and prevent frustrating searches.

Plastic string beads—hung instead of doors allow for easy visibility and easy access to canned goods on pantry shelves.



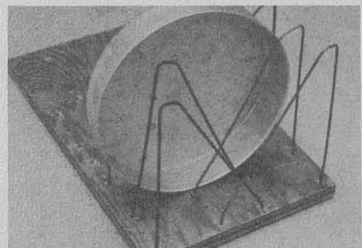
## Vertical Files

It is preferable to store baking pans vertically rather than in heavy stacks so each utensil can be seen easily and taken out separately. There are two methods. The plan at right shows spacing of holes at 2-inch intervals for aluminum wire loops used as pan dividers. Holes may be drilled at 1-inch instead of 2-inch intervals for a finer adjustment.

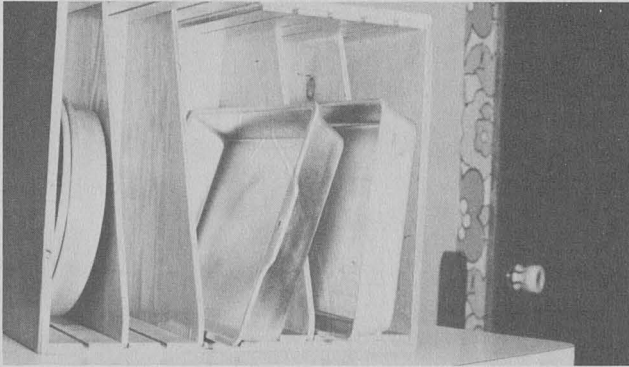
The photograph above shows wire loops, 2 inches and 5 inches high, inserted into holes in shelf to separate and hold pans in place. Note the angle at which the wires are placed to permit the storage of longer pans. Aluminum wire does not rust or require painting.

Holes can be drilled directly into a shelf or a piece of plywood may be placed on top of the shelf.

Coat hanger wire may also be used.



If you want something more permanent, plywood dividers can be placed in grooves made in the shelf and the underside of the shelf above it. The distance between dividers depends on the size of pans used. Another method is to nail narrow strips of wood to form grooves on the shelf, the back of the shelf, or the underside of the shelf above.



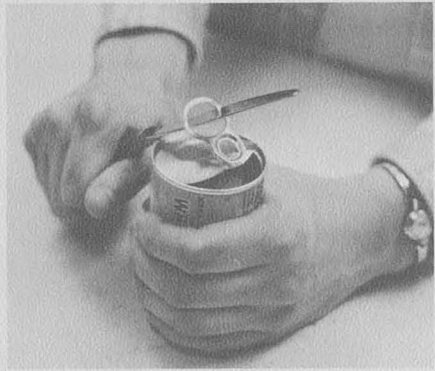
### Opening Packages

Opening packages can be one of the most difficult tasks for a person with rheumatoid arthritis. When grocery shopping, try to select easy-to-open containers. A few companies now use packages with overlapping lids that can be pushed open easily with the whole hand.

Never push in a box tab. The force required can overstretch ligaments leaving thumbs unstable. A linoleum knife which comes with a large handle is easy to hold and the whole arm can be used to slit the box open. Lay the box down and hold steady with the other hand while cutting.



Many orange juice cans and other containers come with flip-tops that open by pulling a steel ring. Never pull on the ring with the fingers. A table knife blade should be placed in the ring and the whole hand and arm can be used to pull on the flip-top. The other hand should be wrapped firmly around the can with fingers placed evenly. Always use the largest joints and muscles possible when doing any activity.



A table knife is also used to open milk cartons. Lay the carton on its side. Wrap the hand firmly around the table knife and use the blade to separate the lips. Set the carton up and finish opening it with the knife blade. Then with the palms of the hands, not the fingers, press the spout open. Always buy the smallest cartons available because they are easier to handle. When pouring from any heavy container use both hands to distribute the weight.

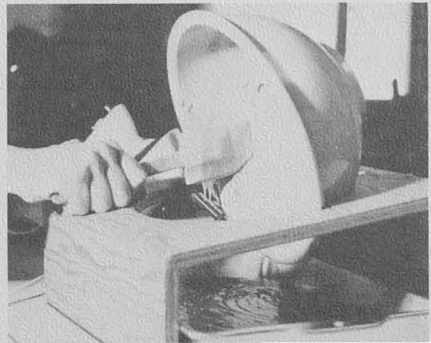


### **Prolonged Holding**

Persons with rheumatoid arthritis should use devices to hold things for them while they work. Static or prolonged holding tires hands and should be avoided.

### **Wooden Bowl Holder**

This unit will hold a bowl firmly for mixing or stirring or on its side for pouring or scraping the contents from the bowl.





Decide on the bowl to be used. Any bowl with a rim wide enough to catch firmly into the notches is satisfactory. Unbreakable plastic or stainless steel is better because it is lighter weight and usually has a better rim.

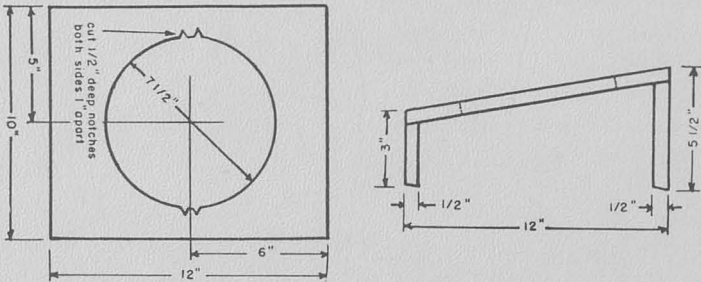
- Other Materials Needed:** Pieces of 1/2-inch thick plywood  
Nails  
Sponge rubber stripping (weather stripping)  
3/8-inch wide and 5/16-inch thick  
waterproof adhesive

### Directions

Cut the plywood to the diagram measurements, and nail together. The bowl opening may need to be changed to fit the size of the bowl.

Glue the rubber weather-stripping across the lower edges of the frame and around the bowl opening to prevent the holder from slipping during use.

Illustrations and text are adapted from "Homemaking Aids for the Disabled," copyright 1963, 1967, American Rehabilitation Foundation.



### Other Holding Devices

A wet dish rag or sponge cloth placed on a counter will prevent a bowl from sliding around.

A wooden cutting board with a 1/2-inch homemade railing in one corner will also keep a bowl steady. This board can be used to hold bread while buttering it. Butter in the direction of the corner.

## AT THE RANGE

### Full Teakettle

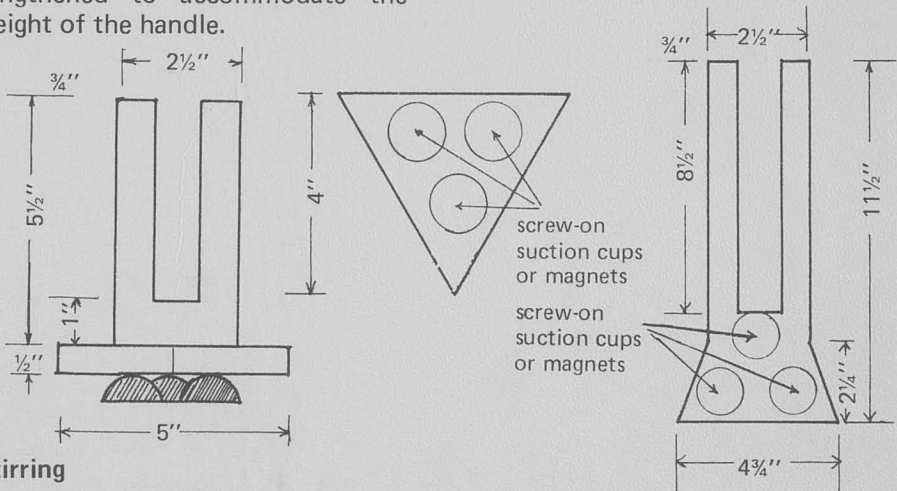
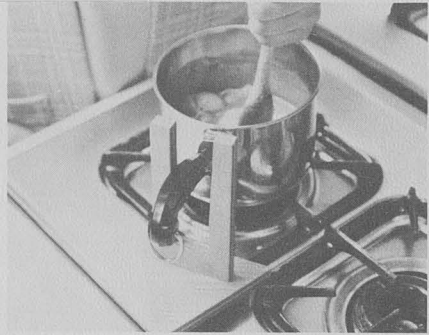
Place the handle of the pan being stirred against a full teakettle set on the back of the range. Stir in the direction of the teakettle and the pan will stay firmly in place.



## Pan Handle Holder

A pan handle holder will hold pans steady while stirring at the range. The width of the center slot may vary with the size of the handles of utensils.

Another variation of this design for small ranges attaches to either side of the range. The upright pieces can be shortened or lengthened to accommodate the height of the handle.



## Stirring

When stirring with the right hand, stir counterclockwise. When stirring with the left, stir clockwise. Rheumatoid arthritic hands tend to bend toward the little finger—called ulnar deviation—so any movement in that direction should be avoided. Alternate hands frequently when stirring to rest them. The handle of the spoon should be parallel to the knuckles. Never allow a utensil to slip between the fingers and force them to the little finger side.