

proper techniques for pill crushing or pill swallowing skills. Teaching parents and patients how to give subcutaneous injections lays the groundwork for future adherence by identifying and addressing potential barriers. Shots are never a pleasant activity; but if available, enlist a child life specialist as a resource in providing the child skills to cope and better understand and accept unpleasant but necessary medical treatments.

Comfort Measures and Exercise

Heat has been shown to be beneficial to children with arthritis. Moist heat is best for relieving pain and stiffness, and the most efficient and practical method is in the bathtub with warm water. In some cases, a daily whirlpool bath, paraffin bath, or hot packs may be used as needed for temporary relief of acute swelling and pain. Hot packs are easily applied using a damp hand towel wrung out after being immersed in hot water or heated in a microwave oven; after testing for heat, hot packs are applied to the area, and covered with plastic to retain heat. Commercial pads that warm in only a few seconds in the microwave are also available. Painful hands or feet can be immersed in a pan of warm water or a paraffin unit.

Pool therapy is the easiest method for exercising a large number of joints. Swimming activities strengthen muscles and maintain mobility in larger joints. Very small children who are frightened of the water can carry out their exercises in the bathtub. Small children love to splash, kick, and throw things in the water. Remember, adult supervision is necessary for all water activities.

Activities of daily living provide satisfactory exercise for older children to maintain maximal mobility with minimal pain. These children are encouraged in their efforts to be independent and patiently allowed to dress and groom themselves, to assume daily tasks, and to care for their belongings. It is often difficult for children to manipulate buttons, comb or brush their hair, and turn faucets, but unless there is an acute flare with significant loss of motion and pain, parents and other caregivers should not offer assistance but extra time and encouragement to proceed independently. In turn, children should learn and understand why others do not help them. Many helpful devices, such as self-adhering fasteners, tongs for manipulating difficult items, and grab bars installed in bathrooms for safety, can be used to facilitate tasks.