

Fun With Grandkids

A little creativity and adaptation can make playtime good again.

GOT GRANDKIDS? If so, chances are good that your painful joints sometimes spoil your fun with them. But with a little imagination and a few changes in activities, it's possible to come up with several ways to have fun with the grandchildren while minimizing physical discomfort.

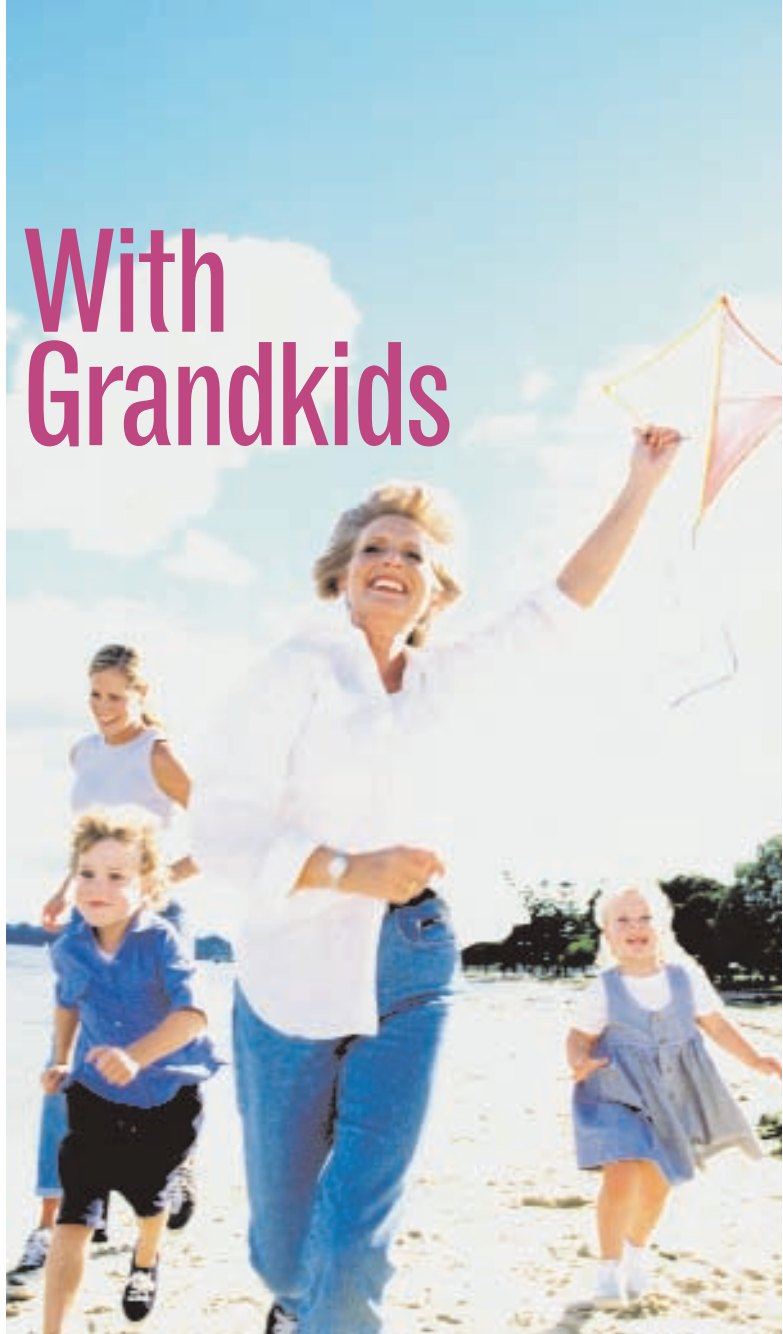
And, as an added benefit to people with chronic conditions, several of these activities involve exercise, which can alleviate joint pain. Others stimulate the brain, which can ward off early signs of Alzheimer's disease.

INDOORS

- **Get up and set up.** Knee-punishing floor games, such as stacking blocks, putting puzzles together and assembling Legos or magnetic building sets, can become table activities. You can sort pieces and help figure out directions.
- **Get crafty.** Working together on craft projects, such as scrapbooks, collages or special-occasion cards, is a great way to encourage little ones' creativity. You could even supply them with easy-to-use disposable cameras to take photos for their projects. Provide kid-safe plastic scissors, and assign grandkids the task of cutting while you do the gluing.
- **Bond and support.** Playing catch may not be an option if you have sore shoulders, but you can find other pain-free ways of bonding with little sports fans. Involve them in collecting baseball cards, pennants or other memorabilia from their favorite team. Share in their hobby by taking them to games, trading events or the local library to search for information on players they like.


OUTDOORS

- **Go fly a kite.** Head out to the park with your grandkids, and launch a kite. Once it's aloft, the kids can do most of the running, but you can guide them in the finer points of letting out enough string to keep the kite soaring steady and high.



- **Take a hike.** Go on a nature hike through a forest preserve, and distribute an "I spy" list of flowers, birds and trees for the kids to try and spot. Beach walking is a favorite of Forrest and Linda Blanchard, of Palmetto, Fla. Their older grandchildren look for the flattest stone, which later is marked with the child's name and the date of the outing.
- **Grow together.** Planting flower seeds in a windowsill garden with grandchildren is fun and educational. Take a trip to your local garden center, and allow the kids to choose the types of flowers they want to grow. Label each seed packet with the child's name, and attach it to a marker. They can check their plants' progress on return visits.

— SHERRY B. HANSON

 Find more great activities to do with your grandkids.
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