

## What are the benefits of completing hand exercises?

Arthritis can cause the joints of the hand and wrist to become painful, stiff and swollen.

Over time grip strength can weaken and sometimes joint deformities develop, making it more difficult to use your hands for day-to-day activities.

The exercises in this booklet aim to reduce pain, stiffness and swelling, improve joint flexibility and help to prevent the development of deformities.

## When should I do the exercises?

You should aim to do the exercises every day, even when your hands are not painful or stiff. Try to do them at a regular time to make them part of your daily routine; this way you are more likely to remember to do them.

If your hands are red, hot, swollen and more painful you may be experiencing a flare-up. You should still do the exercises but reduce the number of repetitions and length of hold.

## What should I do if the exercises make my hands more painful and stiff?

It is common to experience mild aching following exercise. If you find this continues for more than two hours after completing the exercises you should reduce the length of hold and number of repetitions next time. If you continue to experience any problems stop doing the exercises and contact your therapist on the number provided at the back of this booklet.

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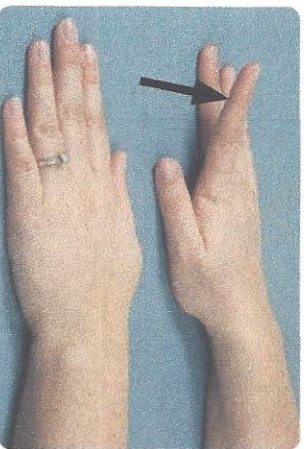
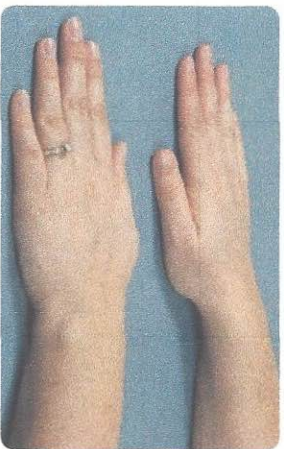
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## Exercise 1

Daily / Weekly

This exercise helps to strengthen the muscles that straighten your fingers (active finger extension).

- Place your hands and forearms body width apart, palms down on a table
- Lift your thumbs up off the table, hold for 5 seconds, then relax
- Repeat with your index, middle, ring and little fingers in turn, making sure that the fingers not involved in the exercise remain flat on the table

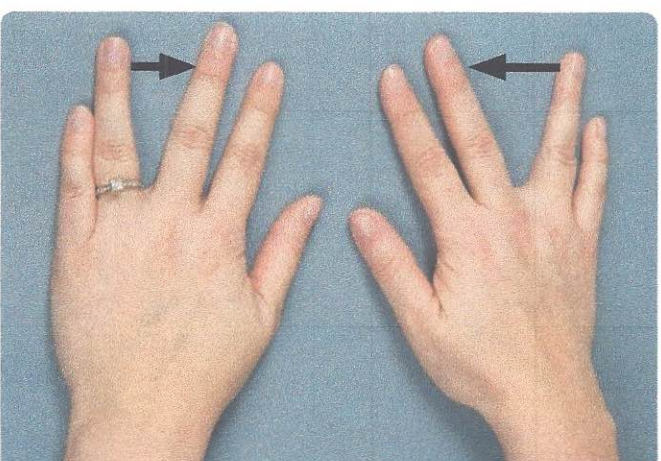


## Exercise 2

Daily / Weekly

This exercise helps to prevent the fingers from moving sideways away from the thumb (ulnar deviation) by strengthening the muscles to keep your fingers straight.

- Place your hands and forearms body width apart, palms down on a table
- Starting with your index finger, lift each finger up and move it sideways towards your thumb. Repeat with each finger in turn
- At the end of this exercise lift your hand and forearm off the table and reposition if you are doing a second repetition
- **N.B. Do not walk the fingers back away from the thumb** as this will strengthen the muscles causing the deformity this exercise aims to prevent!



### Exercise 3

Daily / Weekly

exercise helps to maintain mobility of your thumb (thumb opposition).

Place your hands and rearm body width apart, palms up on a table

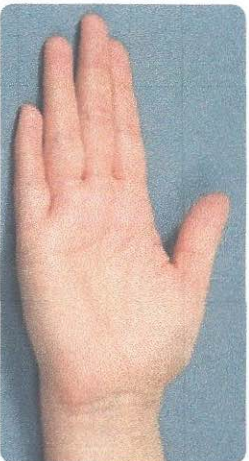
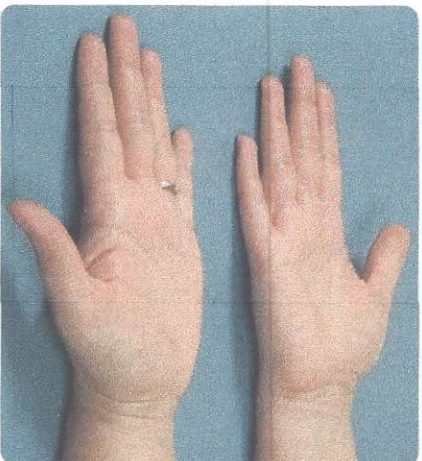
Bring your thumbs up

Towards the ceiling and hold for 5 seconds

Move the tip of your thumb towards the base of your index finger and hold for 5 seconds

Take your thumbs back up towards the ceiling and hold for a further 5 seconds

Return to the start position

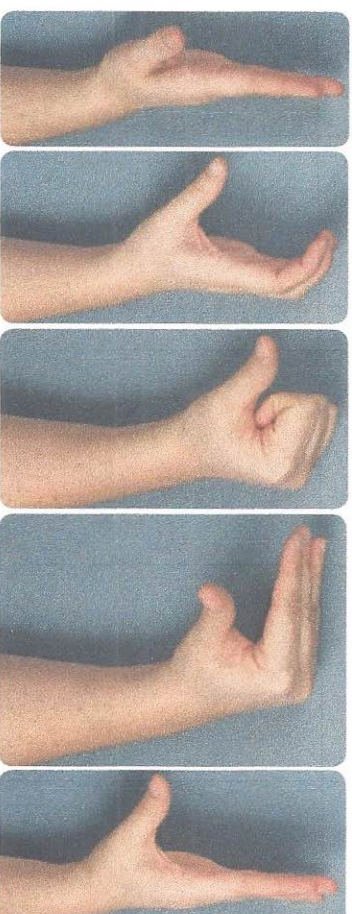


### Exercise 4

Daily / Weekly

This exercise helps to maintain the movement in the joints of your hands and to help the tendons to move smoothly (finger flexion/extension and tendon gliding).

- Rest your elbows on the table with wrists and fingers straight
- Bend the top two joints of your fingers and hold for 5 seconds
- Bend your knuckles down to bring your hand into a fist, holding for 5 seconds
- Keeping your knuckles bent, straighten the end joints of your fingers and hold for a further 5 seconds
- Straighten your knuckles so that your fingers return to the starting position



## Exercise 5

Daily / Weekly

exercise aims to help maintain the mobility of the thumb and the ability to grip between the thumb and fingers (opposition).

Place your elbows on the table with your hands in the air like an 'O' shape by touching your thumb and index finger (making sure that you are bending at all the joints of your thumb and index finger) and hold for 5 seconds. Repeat with each finger on both hands.



## Exercise 6

Daily / Weekly

This exercise helps to maintain the range of movement and strength of your wrists (active wrist flexion/extension).

- Place your forearm on the table or arm of a chair so that your hand is palm down over the edge
- Bend your wrist back so that your fingers point up towards the ceiling and hold for 5 seconds
- Next bend your wrist down so that your fingers point downwards and hold for a further 5 seconds

