

Rheumatoid Arthritis

Take-Home Hand Exercises and Conserving Energy Tips

Before you Exercise



Exercise when you are not tired and when you have the least amount of pain. Warm up your joints by soaking them in warm water or taking a warm shower. Remember to breathe.

If pain increases, stop the exercises and consult your Occupational Therapist.

Therapist Name _____ Phone Number _____

Hand Exercises



Exercising your hands can prevent stiffness and help with joint pain.

Directions:

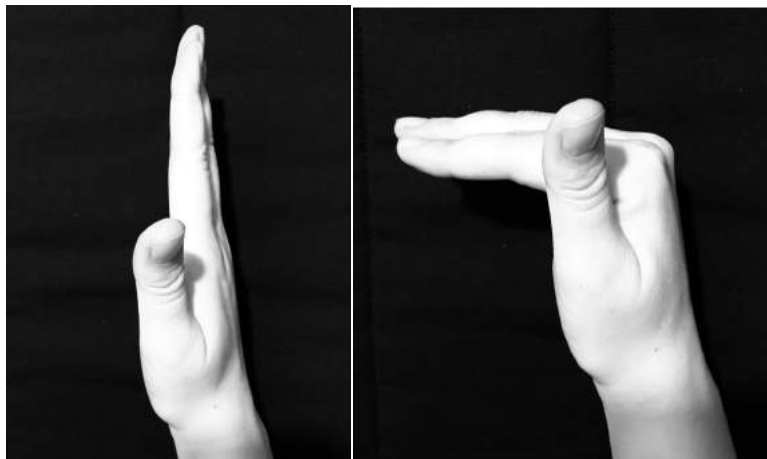
Complete each exercise _____ times a day.

Do each exercise slowly, take your time.

Support your arm on a flat surface, like a table.

Remember to breathe.

Finger Flexion

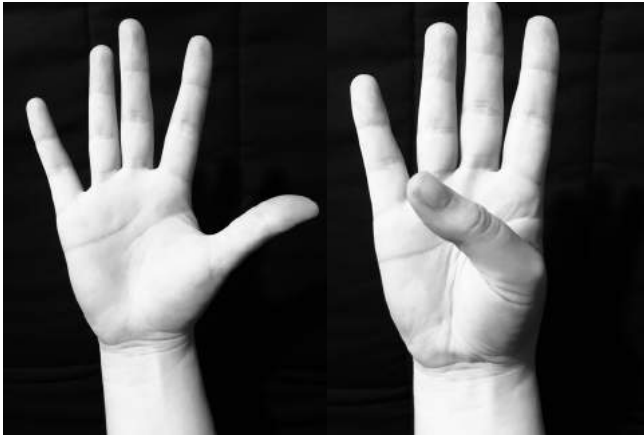


Finger MCP Flexion

1. Start with your hand in neutral
2. Bend your fingers at the base knuckles to make a platform

Repeat _____ times

Thumb Flexion and Extension

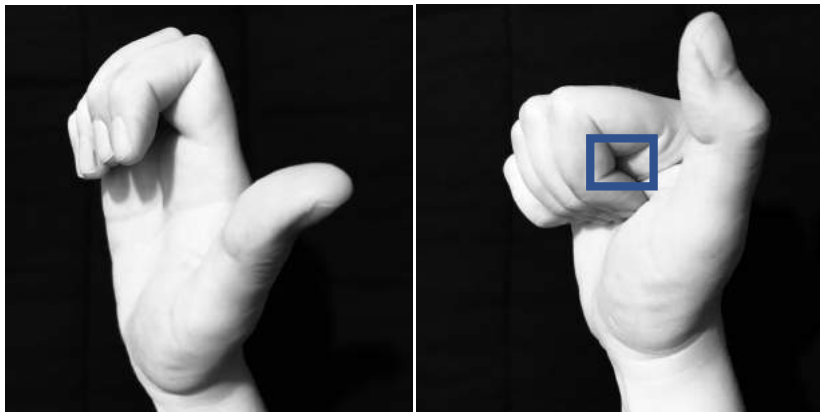


Thumb CMC Flexion / Extension

1. Start with your hand in neutral
2. Bend your thumb across your palm

Repeat ____ times

Make a Fist



Combined Finger Flexion

1. Bend the first two joints of each finger
2. Bend the finger base joints to form a box

Repeat ____ times

Finger Abduction / Adduction

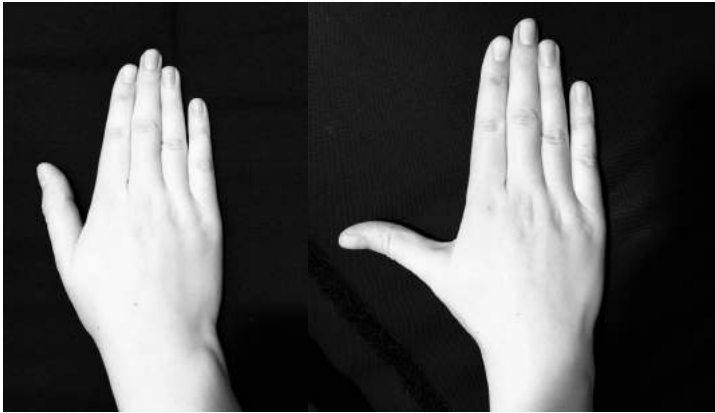


Finger MCP Abduction / Adduction

1. Place your hand flat on the table
2. Spread two fingers apart
3. Repeat with each finger

Repeat ____ times

Thumb Radial Abduction

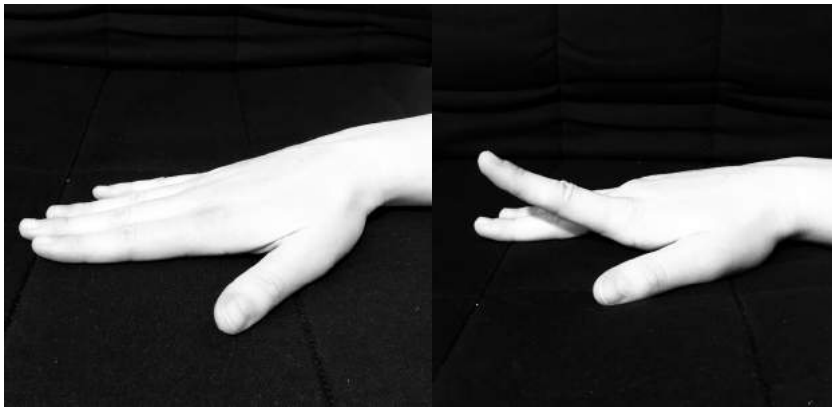


Thumb CMC Radial Abduction

1. Place your hand flat on the table
2. Slide your thumb away from your hand

Repeat _____ times

Finger Extension

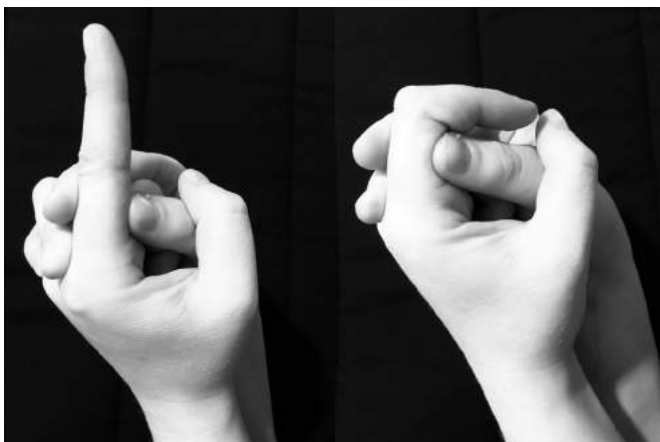


Finger MCP Extension

1. Place your hand flat on the table
2. Lift finger off of the table
3. Repeat with each finger

Repeat _____ times

Supported Flexion / Extension



Finger PIP Flexion / Extension

1. Stabilize finger below middle knuckle
2. Bend your middle knuckle
3. Straighten middle knuckle
3. Repeat with each finger

Repeat _____ times

Energy Conservation Tips

Plan Ahead and Be Organized

1. Gather all items you need before you start a task
2. Keep items organized and within easy reach
3. Sit down to complete tasks when possible

Use Good Posture

1. Sit and stand straight
2. Stooped posture makes breathing difficult
3. Good posture decreases stress and balances muscles

Dressing

1. Gather all clothing you need before you start
2. Sit to dress
3. Minimize bending by bringing foot to opposite knee or use a step stool to put on pants, shoes, socks
4. Wear easy-to-put-on, comfortable clothing and shoes

At Work

1. Take breaks from typing or repeated arm/hand/finger tasks
2. Use a rolling chair for moving short distances
3. Keep everything you may need within reach
4. Slide items across your desk
5. Don't schedule too many activities in one day
6. Prioritize activities based on when you have the most energy

References:

- Hall, C. (2011). *Occupational therapy toolkit: Handouts and treatment guides for physical disabilities and geriatrics*. South Wayne, NJ: Maddak.
- Radomski, M. V., & Latham, C. A. T. (2014). *Occupational therapy for physical dysfunction*. Philadelphia, PA: Wolters Kluwer Health/Lippincott Williams & Wilkins.