



Patient & Family Guide
2021

Hand Exercises



www.nshealth.ca

Hand Exercises

You may experience some of the following symptoms:

Swelling

Your hand may be swollen. Swelling may change throughout the day or vary with activity.

To decrease swelling:

- › Raise your hand above the level of your heart when resting.
- › Bend your fingers often, 10 times every hour you are awake.
- › If you have been given a compression stocking, wear it during the day. Take it off at night and when you do your exercises.
- › Raise your hand at night by placing pillows under your arm.
- › Use ice.

Stiffness

- Stiffness in the hand is common, especially if you have swelling.
- Moving your hand can help get back motion in the joints.

Pain

- You should have mild to moderate discomfort when doing your exercises and with activity.
- If your pain increases, you may need to change or decrease some of the activities that you are doing. It is important that you keep doing the exercises we teach you, but decrease the number of repetitions or how often you are doing them. Speak to your physiotherapist if you have questions.
- You can use heat, ice, rest, and pain medications to help manage your pain.

Your exercise routine will include:

- **Soaking** your hand in warm water for 15 minutes **before** you do your exercises. This will help soothe the pain and make it easier to move. You can also use a hot water bottle or a heating pad wrapped in a towel before doing your exercises.
- **Applying ice after exercise** – use an ice pack or a bag of frozen vegetables over your hand for up to 10 minutes. You can also apply ice additional times in the day to help with pain and swelling.

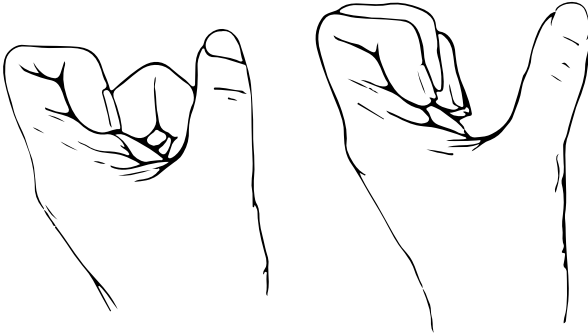
Do these exercises 3 times a day.

Finger active range of motion

Exercise 1

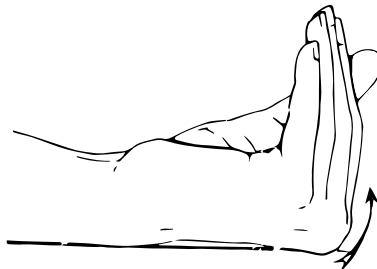
Flexion

Bend all of your fingers so that the tips of your fingers touch the base of your finger. Bend each finger separately and then with all of your fingers together. Hold for _____ seconds. Repeat _____ times.



Exercise 2

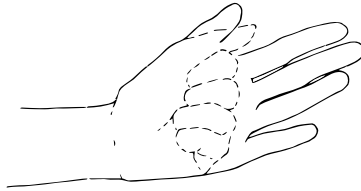
Bend your knuckles while keeping your fingers straight. Hold for _____ seconds. Repeat _____ times.



Exercise 3

Curl your fingers to make a fist.

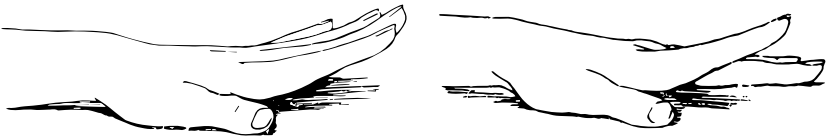
Hold for _____ seconds. Repeat _____ times.



Exercise 4

Extension

Straighten all of your fingers as much as you can. Straighten each finger separately and then straighten with all of your fingers together. Hold for _____ seconds. Repeat _____ times.

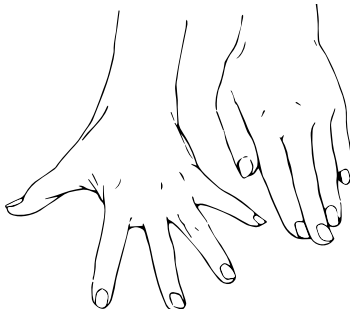


Exercise 5

Abduction and adduction

Spread your fingers apart as far as they can stretch. Hold for _____ seconds.

Repeat _____ times.



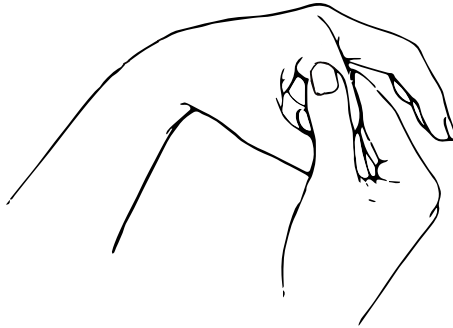
Finger active assisted range of motion

☐ Exercise 6

Metacarpal Phalangeal (MCP) Joint

Using your opposite hand, bend your finger at the first row of knuckles/joints.

Hold for _____ seconds. Repeat _____ times.



☐ Exercise 7

Proximal Interphalangeal (PIP) Joint

Using your opposite hand, bend your finger at the second row of knuckles/joints.

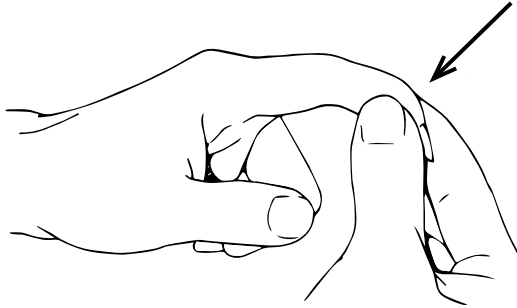
Hold for _____ seconds. Repeat _____ times.



□ Exercise 8

Distal Interphalangeal (DIP) Joint

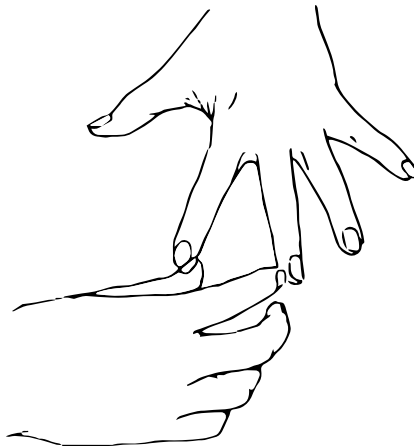
Using your opposite hand, bend your finger at the knuckle/joint closest to the tip of your finger. Hold for _____ seconds. Repeat _____ times.



□ Exercise 9

Finger abduction

Using your opposite hand, move your fingers apart by applying pressure near the ends of your fingers. Hold for _____ seconds. Repeat _____ times.

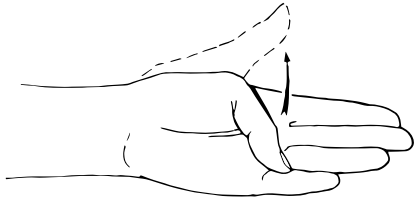


Thumb active range of motion

□ Exercise 10

Flexion and extension

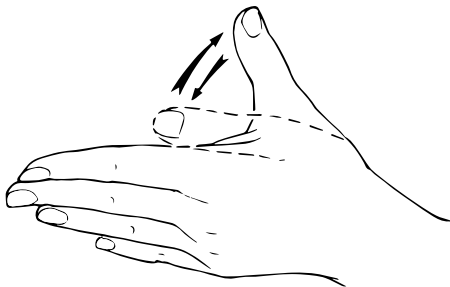
Move your thumb across your palm as far as you can. Then move your thumb out into a “Thumbs up” position. Hold for _____ seconds. Repeat _____ times.



□ Exercise 11

Abduction and adduction

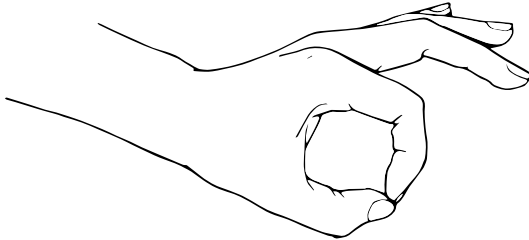
Start with your palm up, move your thumb away from your palm so that your thumb is pointed at the ceiling. Move your thumb back to touch your palm, with your thumb in line with your index finger. Hold for _____ seconds. Repeat _____ times.



Exercise 12

Opposition

Move your thumb to touch the tip of each finger.
Hold for _____ seconds. Repeat _____ times.



Tendon gliding exercises

Exercise 13

Hook fist

Hold for _____ seconds. Repeat _____ times.



Exercise 14

Straight fist

Hold for _____ seconds. Repeat _____ times.



Exercise 15

Full fist

Hold for _____ seconds. Repeat _____ times.



Exercise 16

DIP flexion (active blocked)

Hold your _____ finger firmly at the middle so that only the tip joint can bend. Hold for _____ seconds. Repeat _____ times. Do this _____ times per day.



Strengthening exercises

□ Exercise 17

Finger flexion

Hold a stress ball, play dough, or putty in the palm of your hand. Squeeze your fingers and thumb towards your palm, pressing into the ball/putty/dough. Hold for _____ seconds. Repeat _____ times.



□ Exercise 18

Finger extension

Place an elastic band or putty around the ends of your fingers and thumbs. Start with your fingers and thumb close together and move your fingers apart against the resistance of the band or putty. Hold for _____ seconds. Repeat _____ times.

