

Hand Exercises for Patients with Rheumatoid Arthritis

This leaflet provides information on hand exercises for patients with rheumatoid arthritis, who are under the care of the hand therapy team at St George's Hospital. If you have any further questions on the information in this leaflet, please speak directly to your therapist.

Rheumatoid Arthritis and Exercise

Rheumatoid arthritis is a long-term condition that causes pain, swelling and stiffness in the joints. The symptoms usually affect the hands, feet and wrists.

Rheumatoid arthritis can affect many parts of the body differently. In the hand you may notice that some joints appear stiffer and more swollen. You may also notice that your symptoms fluctuate over the course of the day or even a week.

The following exercises are designed to help keep the joints in your fingers, thumb and wrist from getting stiff and may also improve the strength in your muscles. Your therapist will advise which exercises are going to be most useful for you.

Prior to commencing your exercises, it is useful to warm up your hands, either by soaking your hands in a bowl of warm water or by using a heat pack. This can help reduce some of the stiffness in your joints and make it easier to do your exercises.

Wrist Exercises

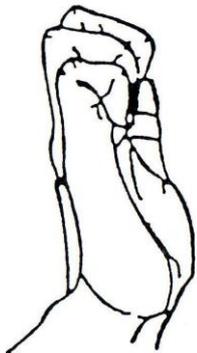


Gently rotate your wrist around in a circle. Stop and rotate in the opposite direction.

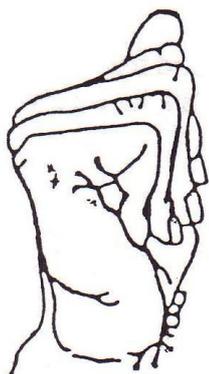


Gently lift your wrist up to the ceiling and lower it back down. Try to keep the movements slow and controlled.

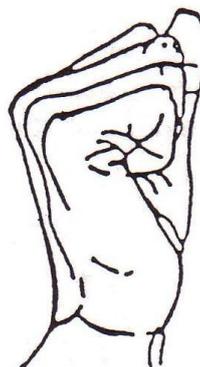
Finger Exercises



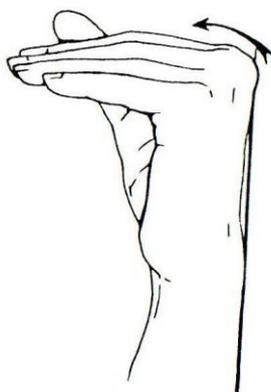
With fingers and knuckles straight, bend the middle and tip joints into a hook.



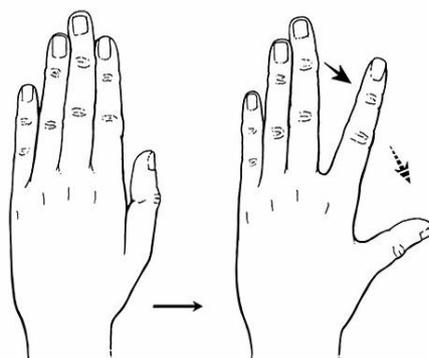
Bend knuckles and middle joints, whilst keeping the tip joints straight.



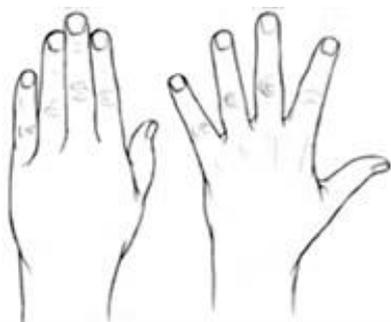
Bend all fingers into a full fist (if able).



Bend your knuckles as far as you can, while keeping the middle and tip joints straight. Slowly bring your fingers back out to straight.



Resting your palm on a flat surface, slide your thumb away from your palm. Walk your fingers **towards** your thumb, one at a time.



Spread your fingers and thumb apart and then gently bring them back together.

Do each exercise _____ times

Hold for _____ seconds

Additional Information

Useful sources of information

Versus Arthritis

Copeman House, St Mary's Court,
St Mary's Gate, Chesterfield S41 7TD

Phone: 0300 790 0400

Website: www.versusarthritis.org

Contact us

If you have any questions regarding the information provided in this leaflet, please feel free to discuss them with your therapist at your next appointment. For more urgent queries the team can be contacted on the **treatment enquiries** phone number listed below.

Your therapist is _____

Treatment enquiries: 020 8725 1038 (answer phone only)

Appointments: 020 8725 0007

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.stgeorges.nhs.uk

Additional services

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS can offer you on-the-spot advice and information when you have comments or concerns about our services or the care you have received. You can visit the PALS office between 9.30am and 4.30pm, Monday to Friday in the main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough wings (near the lift foyer).

Tel: 020 8725 2453 **Email:** pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk

NHS Choices

NHS Choices provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make decisions about your health.

Web: www.nhs.uk

NHS 111

You can call 111 when you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency. NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones.

Tel: 111

AccessAble

You can download accessibility guides for all our services by searching 'St George's Hospital' on the AccessAble website (www.accessable.co.uk). The guides are designed to ensure everyone – including those with accessibility needs – can access our hospital and community sites with confidence.



Reference: THE_HERA_02 **Published:** June 2022 **Review date:** June 2024