Stiff Fingers

Information for patients

Aim of this leaflet

Providing exercises and advice to patients in the management of stiff fingers.

Principles

1. It is important that you use your fingers as normally as possible unless advised otherwise.

2. The aim of good exercise is “little and often”.

Relief of pain and swelling

1. Contrast bathing (effective for pain and swelling)

- Fill a bowl with cold water. Fill another bowl with warm water.
- Immerse the affected area in the cold water for 30 seconds, then alternate to the warm water for 30 seconds.
- Continue alternating between the two bowls for 7 immersions (ensuring that the last immersion is always in cold water).

2. Ice pack (effective for pain and swelling)

- Wrap a tea towel around a bag of frozen peas, or a bag of crushed ice to reduce the risk of ice burns.
- Place your arm on a pillow with your hand higher than your elbow.
- Place the ice pack over the affected area for 10 minutes and then remove.

3. Hot pack (effective for pain only)

- Wrap a tea towel around a hot water bottle filled with warm water or a heat pack.
- Place the hot pack over the affected area for 10-12 minutes and then remove.

Precautions

Please discuss with your therapist if you suffer from heart or circulation problems, or loss of sensation.

Do not use heat on hot or inflamed joints, especially in cases of arthritis.

Finger flexion

1. Follow the sequence below. If you are unable to bend your fingers into the positions shown, you may gently push your fingers towards these positions using your other hand.

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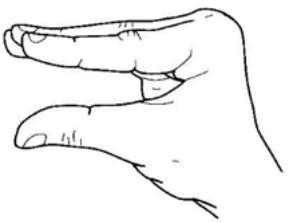
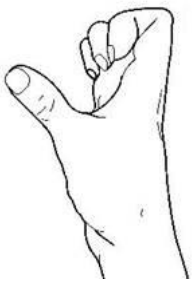
2. 

3. 

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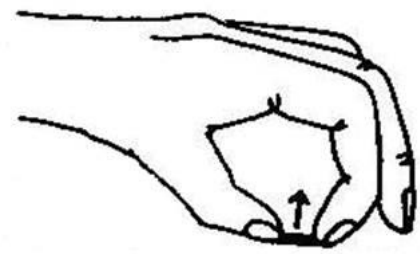
2. Touch each finger in turn to your thumb.

3. Place a 5 pence coin on a hard surface.

- Pick up the coin using the tip of each affected finger in turn and your thumb.
- Ensure the coin does not tilt.



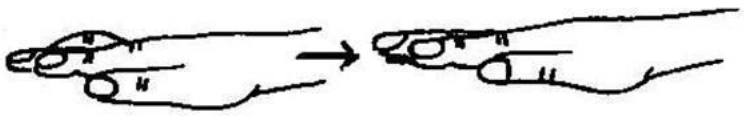
5. Use affected fingers to hold a pencil in your palm.

    - Roll the pencil up towards the base of the fingers.
    - If you are unable to hold a pencil, use a larger object.

Finger extension

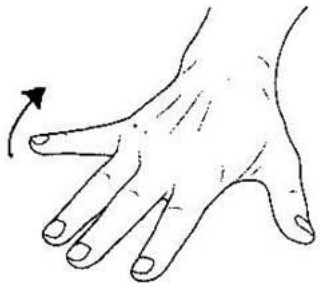
Place your hand, palm down, on a tabletop.

- Pull your hand towards you, using the tabletop to stretch your finger straighter.
- If necessary, use the other hand to push the affected finger straight at the same time.



Place your hand palm down, on a tabletop.

- Keeping the rest of your hand in contact with the table, lift each finger in turn from the surface.



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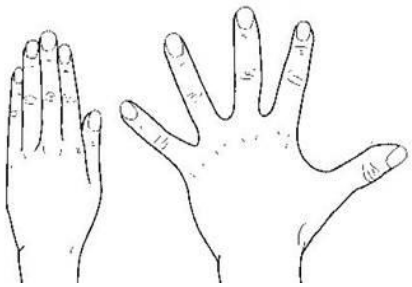
Finger adduction and abduction

Place your hand palm down, on a tabletop.

- Spread your fingers apart and back together, while keeping them on the table.



Hounslow Community Healthcare NHS Trust.

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