

Arthritis Self Management

If you have arthritis, there are steps you can take to slow or prevent permanent joint damage. These include:



Maintain a healthy weight: Excess weight puts strain on your joints. Talk to your doctor about achieving your target weight.

Exercise: Keeping your muscles strong can help protect and support your joints. Your therapist can provide an exercise program that is individualized just for you.

Using joint-protecting devices and techniques. Proper lifting and posture can help protect your muscles and joints. Reducing the workload on joints to complete everyday tasks can help to keep them healthy over time and reduce pain.

Eating a healthy diet. A well balanced, nutritious diet can help strengthen your bones and muscles.

Arthritis Self Help Devices

If you have arthritis, self-help devices can make tasks easier on your joints and more efficient for you. These products help keep joints in the best position for functioning, provide leverage when needed, and extend your range of motion.

In the bedroom When dressing, zipper pulls and buttoning aids can help you fasten clothing. Or you can choose to wear clothing with Velcro fasteners, if available. A long-handled shoehorn extends your reach without bending.

In the kitchen, appliances such as electric can openers, food processors and mandolins (for slicing) make work easier.

Reachers (long-handled tools with a gripping mechanism) can be used to retrieve items stored high or low. Built-up handles and grips make utensils easier to grasp and put less stress on finger joints. Install a fixed jar opener, or keep a rubber jar opener in the kitchen.

In the bathroom Tub bars and handrails provide additional stability and security when you are getting into and out of the bath or shower. These are a must if you have problems with balance. Faucet levers or tap turners are available if your grip is weak. Electric toothbrushes & grooming items with built up handles may be helpful. A raised toilet seat can make it easier to sit down and get up from the toilet.

In the office, many devices and modifications are available, from chairs and work surfaces with adjustable-height to telephones with large push buttons and hands-free headsets. Focus on good positioning and alignment if you work at a desk.

At play Leisure activities can still be enjoyable through the use of assistive arthritis devices, such as kneelers and light-weight hoses for gardening, “no-hands” frames for quilting or embroidery, and card holders and shufflers for card games.

In the car When driving, a wide key holder can make it much easier to turn on the ignition. A gas cap opener can help when filling the tank at the gas station.

Adapted from <http://www.arthritistoday.org/treatments/self-treatments/arthritis-devices.php>



HAND CARE - 13 Joint Protection (Weight Bearing)

Avoid leaning on knuckles.

Solution: Open fingers and use pad of hand when needed. Put extra cushions or folded blanket on seats to avoid using hands for pushing up to stand.



HAND CARE - 14 Joint Protection (Grip)

Avoid: grasping thin utensils for prolonged periods.

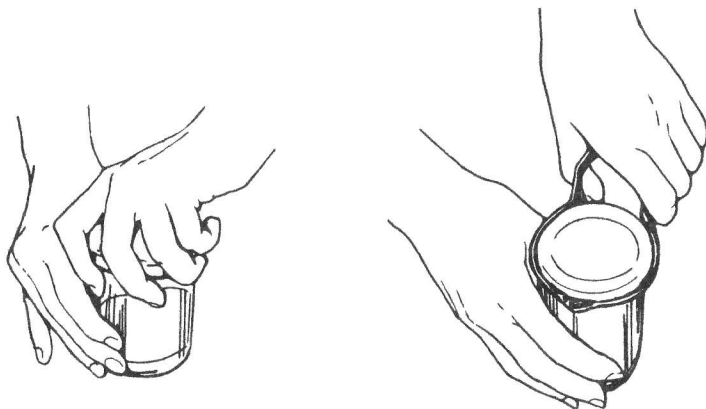
Solution: Hold thick-handled tools in dagger fashion whenever possible for performing tasks such as stirring or scrubbing. Relax fingers every 10 minutes during activity.



HAND CARE - 15 Joint Protection (Ulnar Deviation)

Avoid positions that cause fingers to lean sideways toward little finger.

Solution: Use devices like jar-openers to assist in activities.



HAND CARE - 16 Joint Protection (Use Large Joints)

Avoid placing pressure on fingertips.

Solution: Transfer work to other parts of body which are not affected or which have greater strength. Using body weight to push heavy doors open is an example.



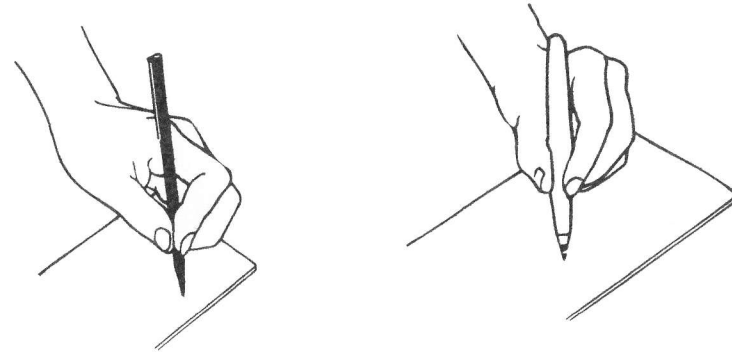
HAND CARE - 18 Joint Protection (Carrying)



Avoid carrying items with weight on fingers.

Solution: Use a shoulder bag or a back pack.

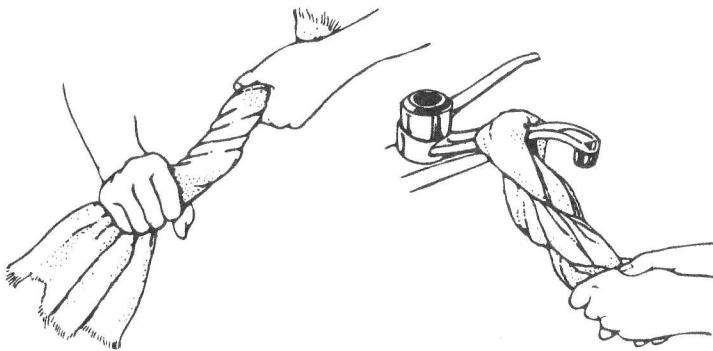
HAND CARE - 17 Joint Protection (Pinch)



Avoid tight pinch, such as when holding a pen.

Solution: Use a thick pen with a felt tip to reduce pressure on fingers.

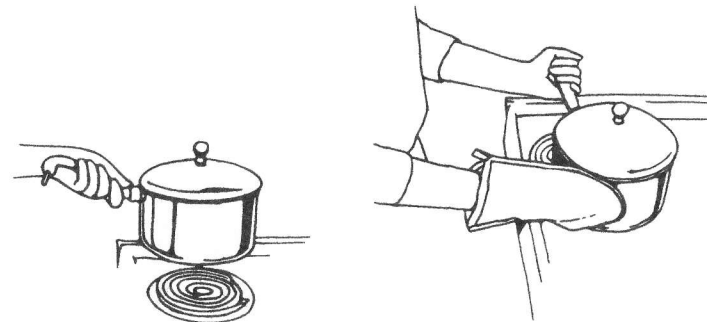
HAND CARE - 19 Joint Protection (Wringing)



Avoid wringing towels by twisting.

Solution: Loop towel around sink faucet as if braiding and pull gently, or let drip-dry.

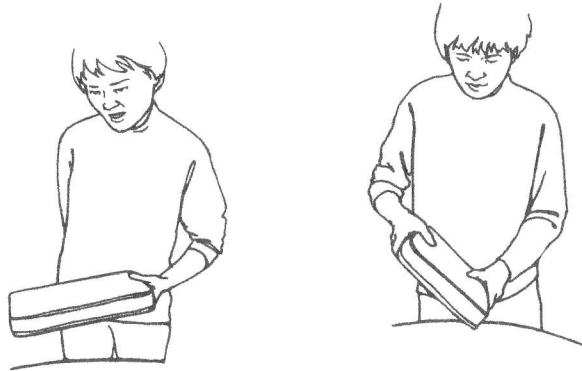
HAND CARE - 20 Joint Protection (Lifting)



Avoid picking up heavy items with one hand.

Solution: Use both hands, and slide item whenever possible.

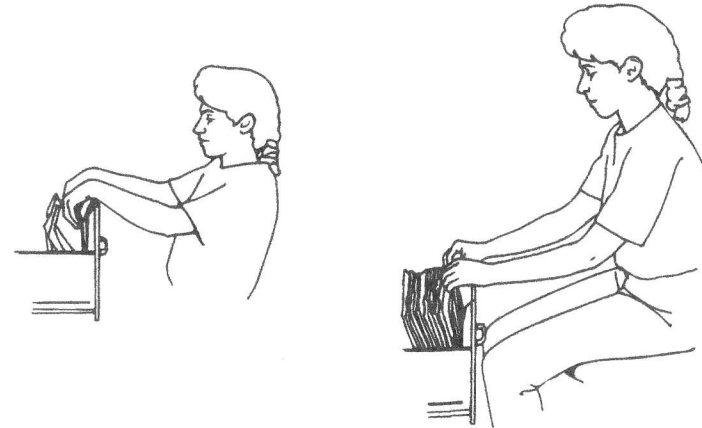
HAND CARE - 21 Work Injury Prevention (Supination)



Avoid repetitive use of one hand which involves turning palm upward.

Solution: Position palm inward, or use both hands to pick up. Take frequent breaks during the day.

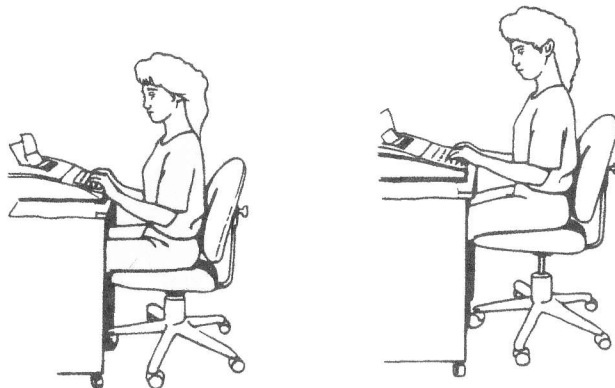
HAND CARE - 22 Work Injury Prevention (Wrist Flexion)



Avoid prolonged holding of wrist in downward position.

Solution: Adjust work height so wrist can be held straight. Vary tasks throughout the day.

HAND CARE - 23 Work Injury Prevention (Wrist Extension)



Avoid prolonged holding of wrist in upward position.

Solution: Adjust work height so wrist can be held straight. If keyboard is too low/high, adjust desk or chair to correct.

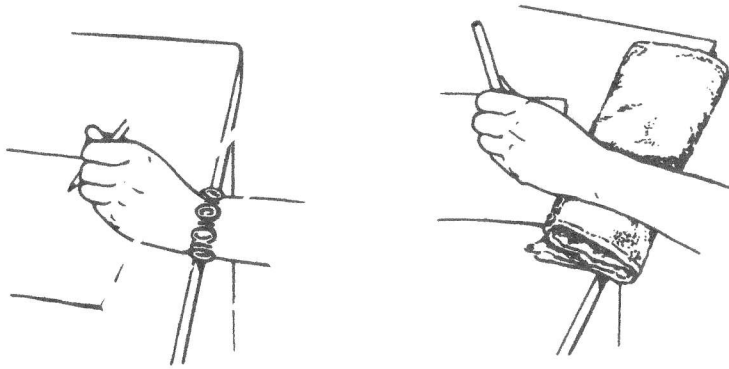
HAND CARE - 24 Work Injury Prevention (Ulnar Deviation)



Avoid placing hand into position where wrist is angled toward little finger side.

Solution: Reposition work materials, or move yourself to approach from different angle.

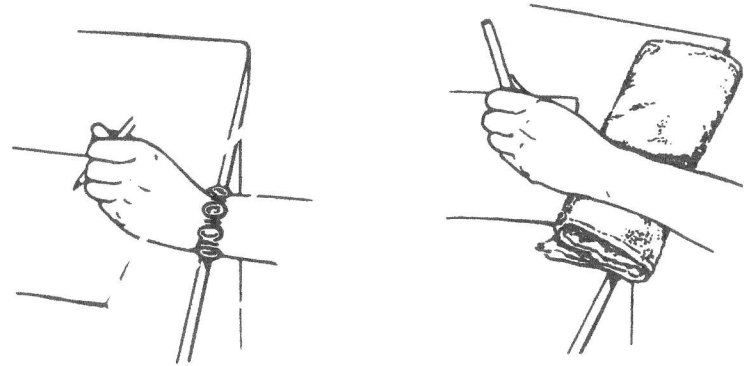
HAND CARE - 25 Work Injury Prevention (Pressure Areas)



Avoid pressure at the wrist and base of palm.

Solution: Pad table edge, if needed, with towel.
Remove bulky wrist jewelry when resting arm on table.

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NOTES

Your doctor or therapist has given you this patient education handout to further explain or remind you about an issue related to your health. This handout is a general guide only. If you have specific questions, discuss them with your doctor or therapist.

Managing Arthritis Pain

Almost all of us know somebody with osteoarthritis (OA)—a problem that affects 21 million Americans. The condition, which is the most common type of arthritis, strikes at bone cartilage so that joints rub painfully against each other.

If you have OA, you probably can't perform simple, daily activities without pain. In fact, pain, stiffness, fatigue and fear of doing more harm can make you afraid of any physical activity.

But inactivity may increase your symptoms because you become weaker and less flexible. Therefore, you should participate in safe, appropriate exercise programs to maintain strength, endurance and flexibility.

The following three types of exercise can reduce arthritis-related disability and pain.

- **Flexibility or stretching.** Gentle, low-intensity exercises performed daily to maintain or improve range of motion are the foundations of most therapeutic exercise programs. Adequate flexibility improves function and reduces the chances for injury.

- **Muscle conditioning** (strength and endurance). These activities are more vigorous than flexibility exercises and are usually performed every other day. They're designed to make muscles work harder than usual. This extra workload may be achieved from lifting the weight of your arm, leg or trunk against gravity, or using weights, elastic bands or weight machines for more resistance. Muscles adapt to the new demands by getting stronger and become capable of working longer.

- **Cardiorespiratory conditioning.** These activities use large body muscles in rhythmic and repetitive movements. They can improve heart, lung and muscle function, as well as improve weight control, mood and general health. These aerobic exercises include swimming, aerobic dance or aquatics, biking, or exercising on equipment, such as treadmills or rowing machines. Daily activities—mowing the lawn, raking leaves, sweeping driveways, playing golf or walking the dog—are aerobic exercises.

The most effective and safest intensity for aerobic exercise is moderate exertion. This means the exerciser can speak normally, doesn't get out of breath or over-heated and can carry on activities at a comfortable pace.

Thirty minutes is the current recommendation for regular aerobic activity on most days of

the week. These 30 minutes can be accumulated in three, 10-minute periods of activity over the course of the day for the same health benefits as one continuous 30-minute session.

Along with exercising, you can manage arthritis by building your life around wellness, not pain or sickness. To that end, your mind plays an important role in how you feel pain and respond to illness. If you think of pain as a signal to take positive action rather than an ordeal you have to endure, you can learn to manage it. Some suggestions include:

- **Relaxation.** When people are in pain and experience stress, muscles tighten, breathing becomes fast and shallow, and the heart rate and blood pressure go up. Relaxation can help you reverse these effects and give you a sense of control and well being, making it easier for you to manage pain. Relaxation involves learning ways to be calm and in control. Methods that can help you do so include yoga, meditation, Tai Chi, and relaxation video and audio tapes.

- **Massage.** Massage warms and relaxes painful areas. You can massage your own muscles or ask your doctor to recommend a massage therapist.

When doing self-massage, stop if you feel any pain. If you have a professional massage, make sure the massage therapist has experience working with people who have arthritis.

Other ways to manage arthritis include thinking positive thoughts, having a sense of humor, eating a balanced diet and enjoying activities with friends and family.

While a comprehensive exercise program for people with arthritis includes these components, the content and progression of a program depends on individual needs and capabilities. If you have a long-standing, severe disease or multiple-joint involvement, be sure to talk to your health care team.

The most successful exercise programs begin with the knowledge and support of people who are experienced with arthritis and exercise. In addition, enlist their support to learn about pain management techniques.

Information adapted from the American College of Rheumatology via www.rheumatology.org/patients/factsheet/exercise.html and the Arthritis Foundation via www.arthritis.org/answers/tips_managepain.asp

Paraffin Baths At Home

With your doctor's approval, you may use a paraffin bath at home to help ease arthritis pain. Paraffin baths and wax are available in most drug and department stores. You can also purchase them in medical supply stores on and offline. A meat or candy thermometer may be used to monitor the temperature.

Procedure

Place the wax in the bath or crockpot. If you are not using a bath with automatic temperature, heat the wax to 125 degrees. Adding some mineral oil to the wax once it has melted will make it a bit thinner and allow it to last a little longer. Hold your hand straight above the bath, dip it in and raise it. Avoid touching the bottom or side of the bath. Repeat this procedure 5 to 10 times, to create a paraffin "glove." Leave the wax on for approximately 20 minutes, and then peel it off.

Helpful Hints

If you add mineral oil to the wax to make it thinner, you will need to dip more times. Once you are done dipping, putting your hand in a plastic bag and then wrapping it with a cotton towel or oven mitt will retain the heat longer. Experiment with how long to keep on the wax based on how it feels.

Considerations

The paraffin bath equipment that is readily available in local stores is usually just big enough to put your hand in. If you would like to use paraffin therapy for your wrist, feet or ankles, larger models are available. Keep in mind that it takes hours for wax to melt. The larger the bath, the longer it will take for the wax to liquefy. Check the packaging for a more exact time frame so the bath is ready when you are.

Warning

Check the temperature before dipping any body parts into paraffin wax because it can cause burns. Do not use this therapy if you have any open wounds. Watch that the wax does not splatter out of the bath. The sides of the unit can become hot, and overheated wax can start fire, so do not leave it unattended.

Cleaning

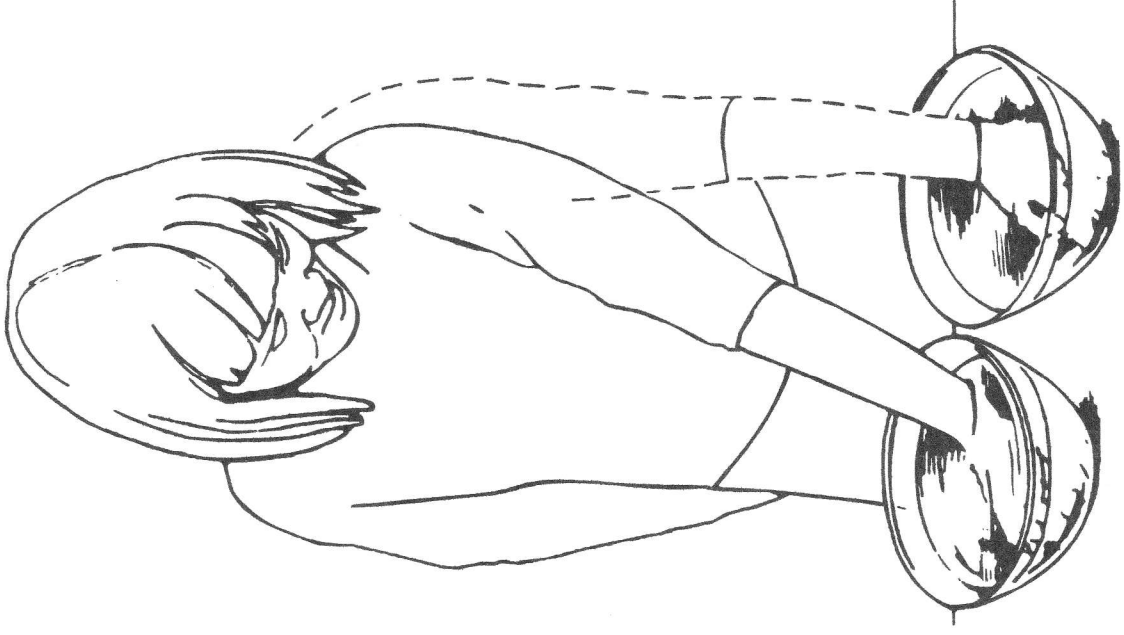
Always place the cover on the paraffin bath when not in use. Clean your paraffin bath once a month, when paraffin is cloudy, or when sediment accumulates on the bottom of the unit.

HAND CARE - 4 Edema Reduction (Contrast Baths)

Have 2 containers deep enough for involved area to be immersed. Fill one with warm water and the other with slightly chilled water.

Soak in warm water for 1 to 2 minutes; cold for ½ to 1 minute.

Alternate and continue for 10 minutes. End in warm water.



Splint Instructions for _____ Rm _____ MR _____

Date reviewed ___/___/___

Before applying the splint, wash the area with warm soapy water and dry completely. Follow any additional instructions as checked by your therapist below:

- Complete range of motion exercises before applying the splint
- Apply stockinette as additional protective barrier between skin and splint
- Complete a thorough skin inspection & report areas of redness, bruising, irritation or open skin right away. Refrain from applying the splint if any of these are noted.

Wearing schedule for your splint:

Precautions:

- Keep the splint away from open flames & from heaters or window sills. It may burn or melt.
- Your therapist has set the splint at the appropriate angle to position your joint(s.) Do not adjust the splint without consulting your therapist.
- Do not apply the straps too tightly. A finger should slide easily between the strap and skin

Clean the splint as follows:

- Hard splint: clean by hand with a damp, soapy washcloth
- Soft splint: Remove the cover and hand wash in mild detergent. Hang to dry.

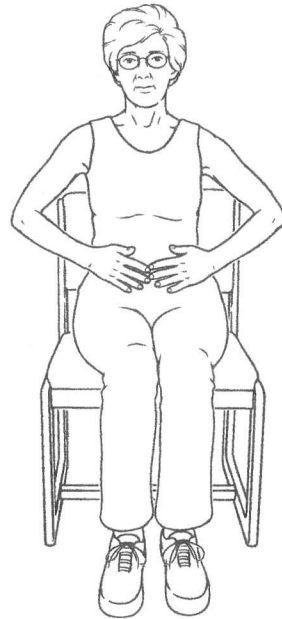
If the splint causes any of the following problems contact your therapist right away at the number below:

- Excessive swelling, severe pain, pressure area redness, excessive stiffness, skin breakdown

Therapist _____ phone _____

ARTHRITIS - 1 Deep Breathing

Place hands on stomach and take a deep breath, filling diaphragm. Feel hands move out. Exhale fully and feel hands move in.

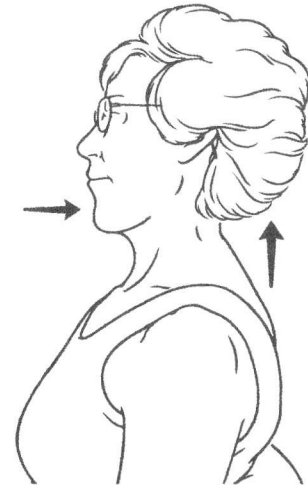


Repeat deep breaths _____ times.
Do _____ sessions per day.

ARTHRITIS - 2 Axial Extension (Chin Tuck)

Gently pull chin in while lengthening back of neck.

Hold _____ seconds while counting out loud.

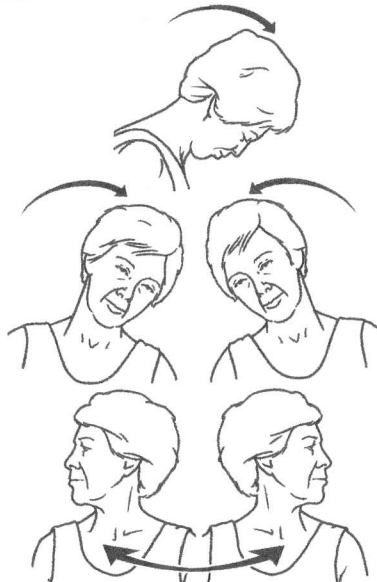


Repeat _____ times.
Do _____ sessions per day.

ARTHRITIS - 3 Head Motion

Gently bring head forward, return. Tilt side to side, return. Turn head to right, return, then to left.

Make all moves as far as possible. If you feel pain, do not move so far. If you feel fatigue, cut exercise repetitions in half.

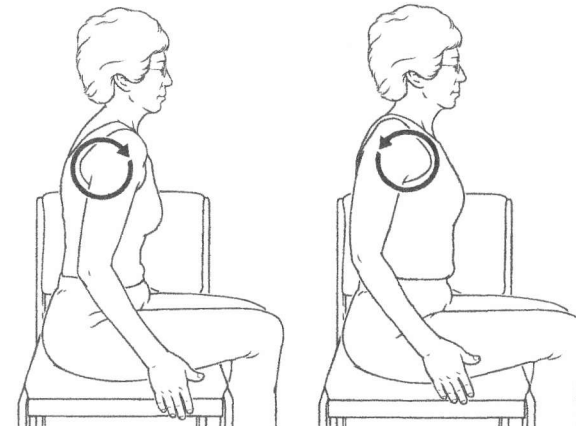


Repeat _____ times.
Do _____ sessions per day.

ARTHRITIS - 4 Shoulder Circle

Move shoulders up and around in a circle, forward and then backward.

Repeat _____ times. Do _____ sessions per day.



ARTHRITIS - 5 Fister



Stretch fingers apart as far as possible. Close them tightly to make a fist.

Repeat _____ times. Do _____ sessions per day.

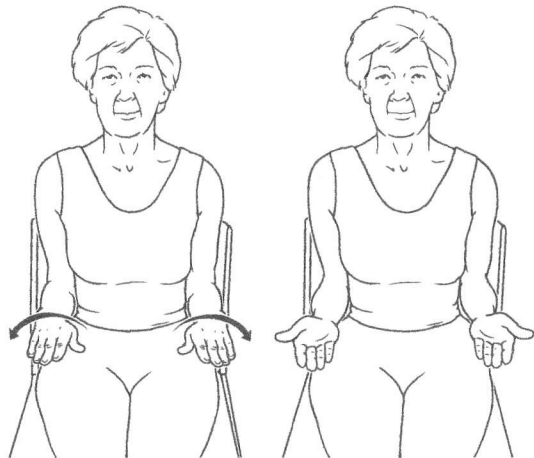
ARTHRITIS - 6 Wrist Bend

Bend wrists to move hands down then up and out as far as possible.



Repeat _____ times.
Do _____ sessions per day.

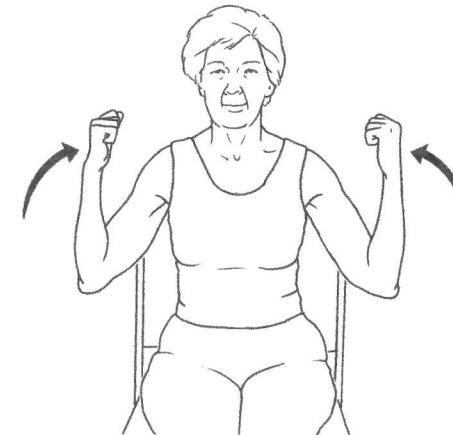
ARTHRITIS - 7 Palm Turn



With elbows bent, turn palms up then down.

Repeat _____ times. Do _____ sessions per day.

ARTHRITIS - 8 Elbow Bend



Straighten elbows, then make fists and bend elbows so fists point toward shoulders.

Repeat _____ times. Do _____ sessions per day.

HAND - 11 Finger Opposition

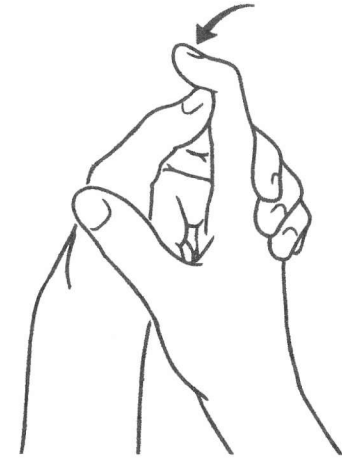
Actively touch right thumb to each fingertip. Start with index finger and proceed toward little finger. Move slowly at first, then more rapidly as motion and coordination improve. Be sure to touch each fingertip.



Repeat _____ times per set.
Do _____ sets per session.
Do _____ sessions per day.

HAND - 6 AROM: DIP Flexion / Extension

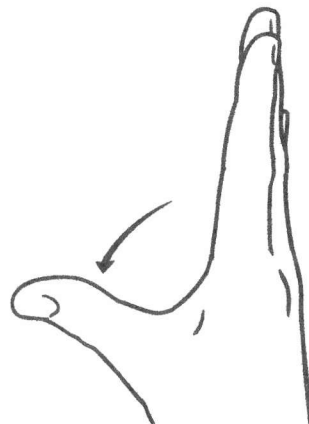
Pinch middle knuckle of _____ finger of right hand to prevent bending. Bend end knuckle until stretch is felt. Hold _____ seconds. Relax. Straighten finger as far as possible.



Repeat _____ times per set.
Do _____ sets per session.
Do _____ sessions per day.

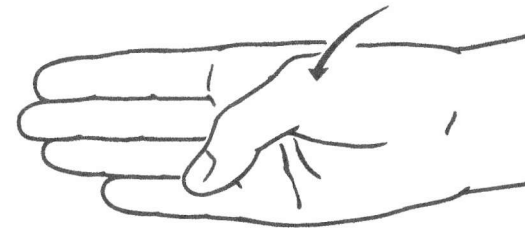
HAND - 10 AROM: Thumb Abduction / Adduction

Actively pull right thumb away from palm as far as possible. Hold _____ seconds. Then bring thumb back to touch fingers. Try not to bend fingers toward thumb.



Repeat _____ times per set.
Do _____ sets per session.
Do _____ sessions per day.

HAND - 9 AROM: Thumb Flexion / Extension



Actively bend right thumb across palm as far as possible. Hold _____ seconds. Relax. Then pull thumb back into hitchhike position.

Repeat _____ times per set. Do _____ sets per session.
Do _____ sessions per day.

HAND - 7 AROM: PIP Flexion / Extension

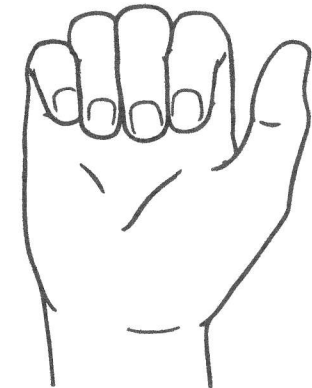
Pinch bottom knuckle of _____ finger of **right** hand to prevent bending. Actively bend middle knuckle until stretch is felt. Hold _____ seconds. Relax. Straighten finger as far as possible.



Repeat _____ times per set.
Do _____ sets per session.
Do _____ sessions per day.

HAND - 8 AROM: Finger Flexion / Extension

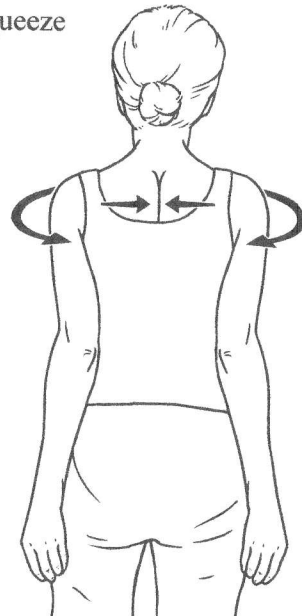
Actively bend fingers of **right** hand. Start with knuckles furthest from palm, and slowly make a fist. Hold _____ seconds. Relax. Then straighten fingers as far as possible.



Repeat _____ times per set.
Do _____ sets per session.
Do _____ sessions per day.

POSTURE - 7 Shoulder Blade Squeeze

Rotate shoulders back, then squeeze shoulder blades together.

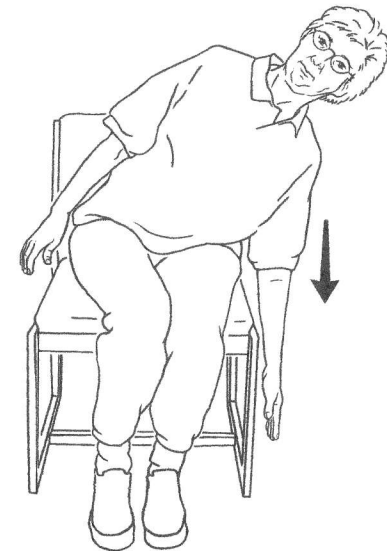


Repeat _____ times.
Do _____ sessions per day.

POSTURE - 8 Two-Sided Arm Tilt

Relax upper body and slowly slide arm toward floor.

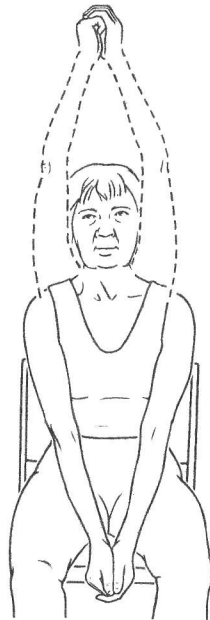
Repeat exercise to other side.



Repeat _____ times.
Do _____ sessions per day.

ARTHRITIS - 9 Arm Extender

Clasp hands and reach both arms up as far as possible without pain. Try to keep shoulders down.



Repeat _____ times.
Do _____ sessions per day.

ARTHRITIS - 10 Elbow Back



Place hands behind head and gently bring elbows back.

Repeat _____ times.
Do _____ sessions per day.

ARTHRITIS - 11 Trunk Tilt

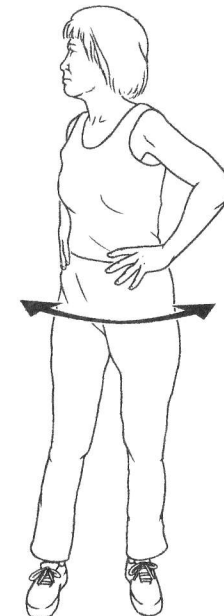
With hands behind head, gently tilt trunk from side to side as far as is comfortable.



Repeat _____ times.
Do _____ sessions per day.

ARTHRITIS - 12 Trunk Rotator

Place hands on hips and gently turn trunk to left and right.



Repeat _____ times.
Do _____ sessions per day.

ARTHRITIS - 13 Trunk Extender

Clasp hands in lower part of back and gently arch back.



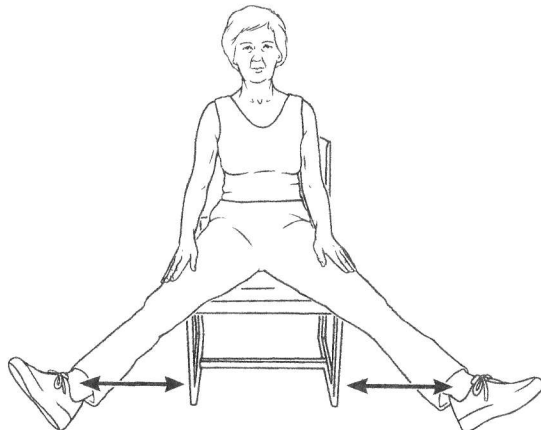
Repeat _____ times.
Do _____ sessions per day.

ARTHRITIS - 14 Knee Straightener



Straighten one leg and then relax it. Repeat with other leg.
Repeat _____ times. Do _____ sessions per day.

ARTHRITIS - 15 Leg Spreader

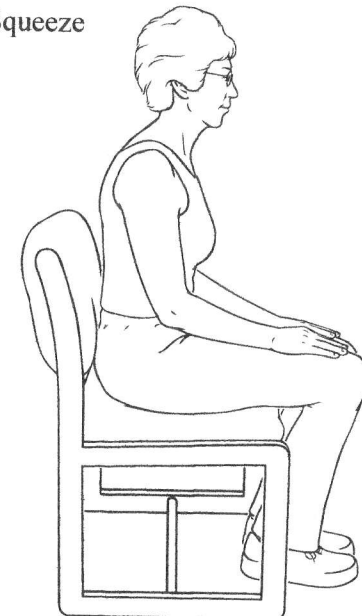


Starting with legs straight in front, move them apart and then together.

Repeat _____ times. Do _____ sessions per day.

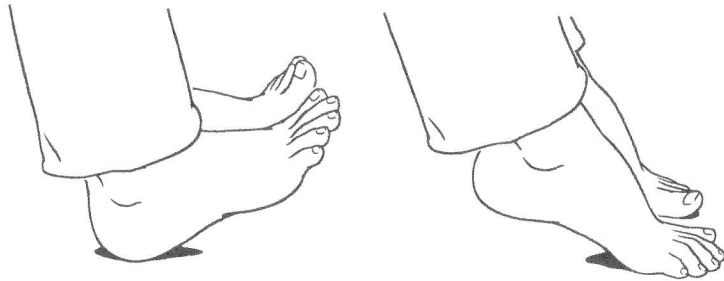
ARTHRITIS - 16 Buttocks Squeeze

Squeeze buttocks and hold _____ seconds while counting out loud.



Repeat _____ times.
Do _____ sessions per day.

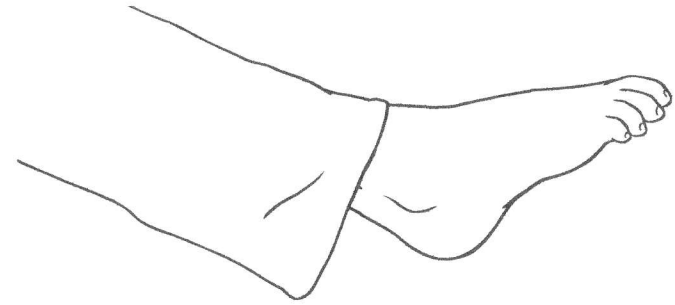
ARTHRITIS - 17 Ankle Bend



Point toes down and then up, bending ankles as far as possible.

Repeat _____ times. Do _____ sessions per day.

ARTHRITIS - 18 Toe Bend



Curl toes under as tightly as possible. Relax.
Repeat with other foot.

Repeat _____ times. Do _____ sessions per day.