



How to do simple hand exercises after surgery/injury to the hand

Simple hand exercises

After surgery or injury to the upper limb, there is a tendency for the hand to swell and to become stiff.

You should keep your hand raised to the level of your shoulder as much as possible. This reduces swelling and pain; it also makes it easier to do your exercises. It is particularly important for you to do the following exercises from the day after your surgery/injury to help you get the best result unless you have been informed otherwise.

If necessary, you should take painkilling medication so that you are able to do these exercises, though you are likely to feel some discomfort or mild pain while you are doing the exercises properly.

How often should I do these exercises?

You should do 10 repetitions of each exercise every hour that you are awake. Aim to repeat these 10 times each day. You will find that in the morning, it may be more difficult to do the exercises, but the more you repeat them, the less stiff you will become.

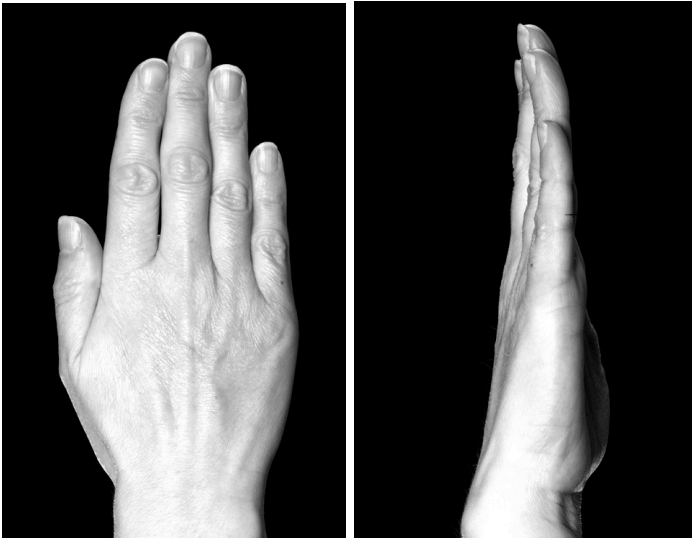
How do I do the exercises?

You should do slow, deliberate movements of your digits, without jerking them. Hold each position for 5–10 seconds then relax.

Finger exercises

When doing the bending exercises, think of your fingers as having three joints each. The exercises concentrate on two joints at a time.

Standing to attention



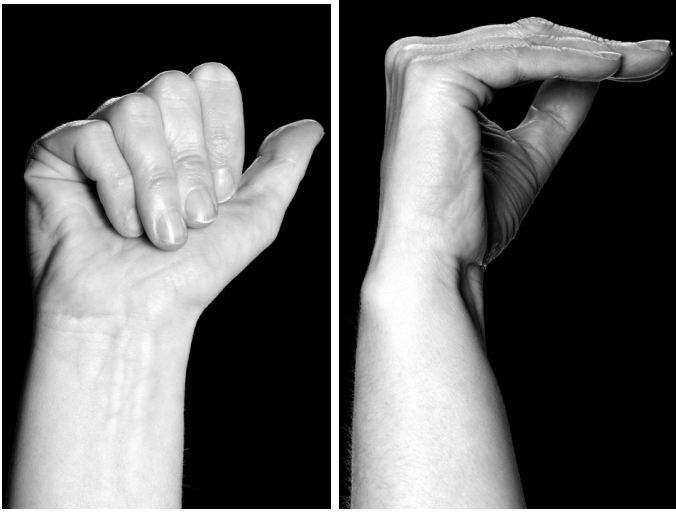
Start with your hand relaxed. Straighten all your fingers, especially concentrating on the middle joint, which may tend to be stiff in a slightly bent position.

The claw or hook



Bend the top two joints of each finger, as if you are hooking your fingers around a carrier bag.

The 'L' or flat fist



Bend the knuckle joint (the joint nearest your palm). This joint tends to stiffen straight, so you really need to work at getting this joint bent over as much as possible.

The middle joint is bent, to make a flat fist; or kept straight (to look like an 'L')

The full fist

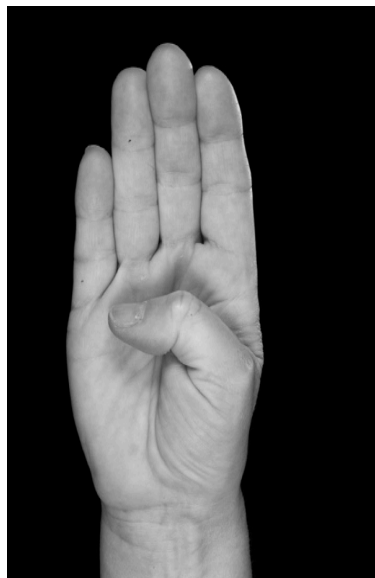


You may now be able to make a full fist; tuck your fingers into your palm, concentrating on bending the knuckle joints. Your bandage is likely to make this position difficult if you still have one.

Thumb exercises

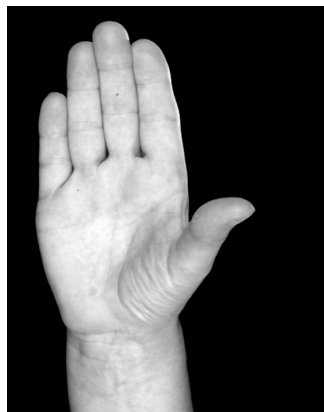
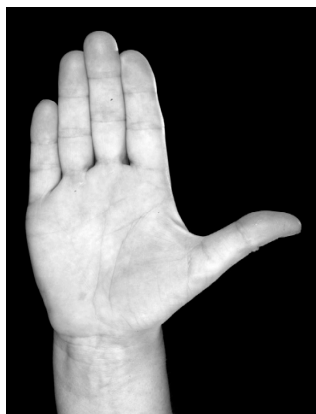
Thumb tip bend

Place your hand like you are preparing to shake someone's hand, with your thumb resting next to your index finger. Bend the tip of your thumb across your palm toward the bottom of the little finger and your thumb nail pointing towards your fingers.



Thumb opposition

Place your hand like you are preparing to shake someone's hand, with your thumb pointing to the ceiling. Using a wide circular movement, rotate your thumb to reach away from your palm and continue around to touch your palm near the base of your little finger. Your thumb nail will point the opposite direction to your fingernails.



How to obtain advice

Upper Limb/Hand Therapy Department

Tel: **0121 371 3488 Available Monday- Friday only.**

If you are concerned about your hand, then please seek medical advice and attend the Emergency Department.

Please feel free to ask anything, no matter how silly you may think the question, we are all here to help you.

The Birmingham Hand Centre

Queen Elizabeth Hospital Birmingham

Mindelsohn Way, Edgbaston

Birmingham, B15 2GW

Telephone: 0121 371 2000

Accessibility

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