

Treatment Information

Exercises for people with inflammatory arthritis

Exercise has three important functions:

- 1) To maintain or improve muscle power around the joints (but not body building)
- 2) To maintain or improve the range of movement of a joint
- 3) to help achieve a functional goal or target e.g. getting out of a chair, dressing.

Starting your exercises:

'Listen' to your body: the purpose of the exercise is to put each joint through its own natural movement. Eventually you will learn to understand your body's signals and know just how much to do, and when to rest. Several short periods of exercise a day are much better than one long session.

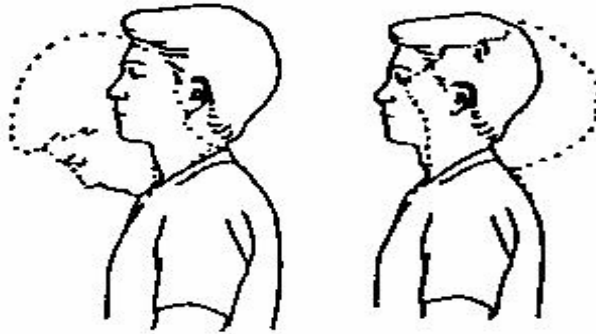
- Your exercises should always be carried out in a slow, controlled manner
- Start gently, one time through each exercise, and hold each position for three seconds
- If 24 hours after you have finished your exercises you feel alright, gradually increase each exercise to 3 repetitions, perhaps over the period of one week
- Stop at the first sign of any problems and review the situation. If your muscles ache but there is no increase in joint pain, you may continue with the same number of repetitions again
- If you experience an increase in joint pain, then decrease the number of repetitions. If there is a marked increase in joint pain or swelling, stop that exercise and seek advice
- When joints are flared up (swollen, hot and painful) it may be important to rest. If you do exercise, ONLY repeat each exercise once.
- Get the balance right – there may be individual variation and variation from day to day.

Neck Exercises:

It is important that you check with your Rheumatology Practitioner or doctor before including neck exercises in your regime. Do these exercises while sitting:

Drop your chin gently down onto your chest. Lift your head back to the mid position, pause, then gently lift your chin and look up. Return to the mid (normal) position.

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Turn your head slowly to look over one shoulder. Return to the mid-position, pause, and then turn to look over the other shoulder. Return to the mid-position.



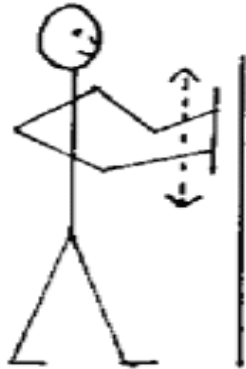
Bend your head to the side, bringing right ear towards right shoulder. Return to the upright position, pause, and then bend your head, left ear towards left shoulder. Return to the upright (mid) position.



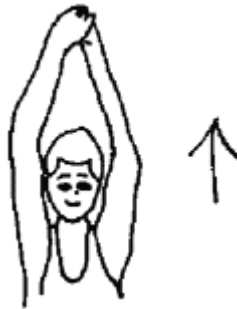
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Shoulder Exercises:

Stand facing a wall. Place both hands on a tea towel and hold against the wall. Slide the tea towel up the wall until a stretch is felt in the shoulders. Hold position for a count of ten, and then relax to a normal position.



Lift your arms up as if you are going to clap your hands above your head.



Fold your arms in front of your chest and lift them up to take your forearms to your forehead and down again. On the last repetition bring your arms down to shoulder level and stretch to the right and then to the left as far as you can go (as if rocking a baby).

Elbow Exercises:

While sitting, try to straighten your arms in front of you, with palms facing upwards. Then bend your elbows by taking your palms towards your shoulders.

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Wrist and Hand Exercises:

Keep wrists mobile – you may find it easier to support your forearm on the arm of a chair or over the edge of a table. Make sure the wrist can move freely.

- Lift your wrist up, until you feel a gentle stretch. Hold for 3-5 seconds.
- Then bend your wrist down towards the floor until you feel a gentle stretch. Hold for 3-5 seconds.

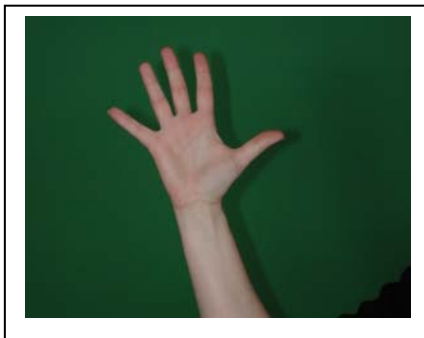


Finger Walking to Thumb:

Put your hand flat on a table in front of you. Stretch your thumb as far down at the side as you can hold for 3-5 seconds.

Keeping your hand flat on the table throughout - lift the index finger only up off the table, hold for 3-5 seconds and 'walk' it across towards the thumb.

Then continue with your middle, then ring, then little fingers. This exercise is really hard. (Never walk your fingers back towards the little finger)

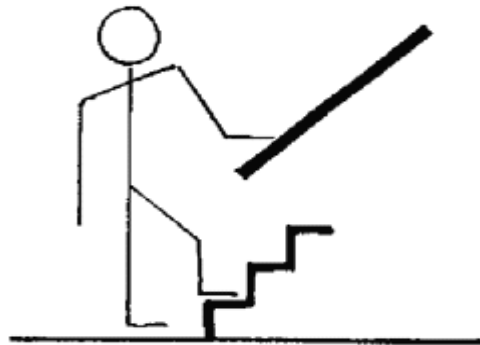


These hand exercises are taken from a booklet by Alison Hammond, Derbyshire Royal Infirmary. If you have a particular concerns regarding your finger and hand movement ask for a referral to see an occupational therapist.

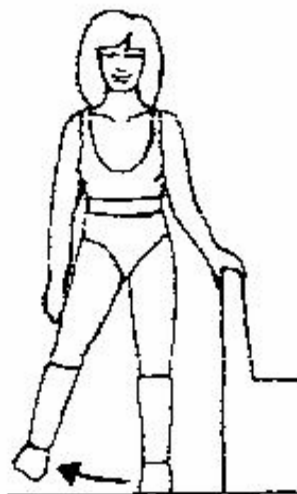
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Hip and Knee Exercises:

While standing, lift your right leg on to a step or stair, and then lower again on to the floor. You may need to hold on to a support with your left hand. Repeat with your left leg. This time, you may need to hold on to a support with your right hand.



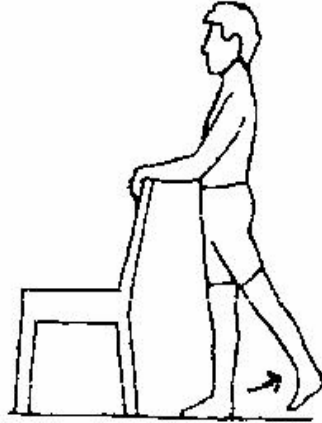
While standing up straight, lift your leg out sideways. Hold for a count of ten, then lower slowly - keep absolutely upright; do not tilt your body to the left or right. You may need to hold on to a support with your left hand. Repeat the exercise with the left leg. This time you may need to hold on to a support with your right hand.



While standing, lift your right leg back behind you, keeping your leg straight. Hold for a count of ten, then lower slowly - keep absolutely upright; do not tilt your body forwards.

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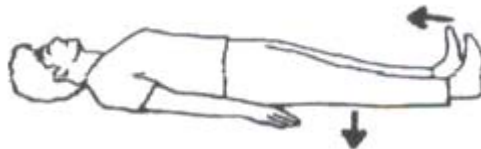
You may need to hold on to a support with your left hand. Repeat this exercise with the left leg, holding on to a support with your right hand, if necessary.



Start in lying position with arms at your side. Place a rolled up towel under your right knee. Bend your right foot up from the ankle, then, straighten your right knee so that your heel is lifted off the bed. Hold this position for a count of ten and then lower slowly to relax. Repeat with your left leg.



Quadriceps: While lying down, bend your ankle so that your toes point towards your head, then push the back of your knee down hard into the bed; hold for a count of 5 and then relax. Repeat with the other leg.



Lying down, roll your legs inwards and then outwards.

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Sit with your feet placed flat on the ground. Straighten one leg out in front of you and then slowly bend it again. Repeat with the other leg.



Foot and Ankle Exercises:

Do the first three exercises while lying with your legs straight.

Bend your ankle upwards so that your toes point towards your head, then, bend your ankle downwards and point your toes down as far as they will go.



Circle your foot around in a circular motion, first one way, and then the other. Make sure that only your foot is moving and not your whole leg. Repeat with the other foot.



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Pull your feet up towards your head. Now turn the soles of your feet in to face each other. Then turn them out away from each other. Make sure that only your feet are moving and not your whole legs.

Sit with your feet flat on the floor. Keeping your toes as straight as possible, press down your toes on the floor, and shorten your foot by pulling up the arch on the inside of the foot.



Points to Remember

Do:

- Try to ensure that every day you move all your joints through their normal range of movement.
- Pace yourself with work or exercise. Too much can lead to painful, stiff joints the next day
- Ask to be referred to the Physiotherapy Department if you find these exercises difficult or you would like to be given more instruction.

Do Not:

- Force any movement
- Start by doing too many exercises.
- 'Push' yourself because you think it is good for you.
- Try to 'work off' pain and inflammation.
- Stand for long periods when you could sit.
- Put the pillows under your knees, this can lead to difficulty straightening your knees.

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Contact Details

If you have any further questions or need advice about your treatment phone the Rheumatology Advice line on

01202 442849.

www.poole.nhs.uk/our_services/rheumatology.asp

For further health-related information, please contact:

The Health Information & Resource Centre

Poole Hospital NHS Foundation Trust

Longfleet Road

Poole

BH15 2JB

Telephone: (01202) 448003

Rheumatology Practitioners

January 2008. Date of review January 2010

Rheumatology Department, Poole Hospital NHS Trust

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We can supply this information in larger print, on audiotape, or have it translated for you. A member of staff will be happy to discuss this with you. Please call PALS on 01202 448499 or the Health Information Centre on 01202 448003 for further advice