

Hand Exercises Using Household Items

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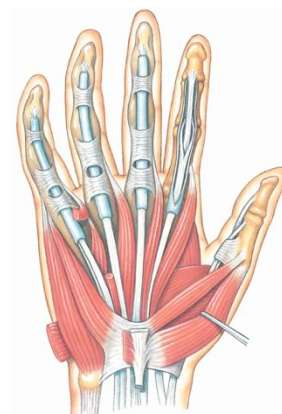
Muscles of the Hand

◇ The hand has a complex system of muscles, tendons, and ligaments that allow us to interact with our environment in different ways.

◇ There are small muscles within the hand that are integral for hand dexterity and strength for pinching and grasping.

◇ Weakness and stiffness of the hand can be a common occurrence with:

1. Direct trauma to hand with a subsequent period of immobilization
2. Decreased use of the hand after injury to shoulder, elbow, or wrist due to swelling/pain throughout the arm
3. Decreased use due to pain from atraumatic sources (eg. arthritis, repetitive use, nerve damage)



Exercising the Hand

◇ These exercises can be difficult and frustrating at first. Your body takes time to heal itself after an injury, especially in a complex region like the hand. Be patient.

◇ Listen to your body. If you are having sharp pains in hand/wrist or in the joints, or unsure of how much to do, perform **exercises** within a **PAIN-FREE range**.

◇ If pain persists, **decrease amount** of exercise or **stop** exercise.

◇ Muscle soreness, fatigue, dull aching are ok. Swelling or increase in pain is not!

◇ Remember that your daily activities also work out your hand.

◇ Ice the hand for 15 minutes after exercising.

◇ Call IMG-Physical Therapy at **610-944-8140** if you have any questions or concerns with an exercise to avoid potential injury.

Warm-up Exercises and Stretches

- ◇ Alternate between making a gentle fist (do not clench) and opening your hand as wide as you can comfortably.

Repeat 15-20x

- ◇ Make an "O" shape by touching your thumb to the tip of your finger and hold. Repeat with each finger.

5-sec hold x 10 with each finger

- ◇ Gently stretch your thumb away from your hand so that it forms an "L" and hold. Then stretch your thumb towards base of pinky finger and hold.

10-sec hold x 10

Towel/Sponge Grips

- ⇒ If your hand is stiff, complete these exercises first with your hand and wrist **submerged in warm water**
- ⇒ Start with a **gentle grip** and then progressively increase the strength of your grasp/squeeze
- ⇒ Try using a wet towel or sponge with a collecting bucket! This gives you a visual on your strength and can be used to set goals! How much water can you squeeze out?

◇ *Wring It Out:* **20-30x ea**



With both hands firmly gripping two ends of your towel, roll the involved hand/wrist **away** from you (wrist flexion) and **hold for 4-5 secs** before releasing the twist.

Then repeat the exercise with the wrist rolling back **towards** you (wrist extension).

◇ *Squeeze It Out:* **5-sec. hold x 10**

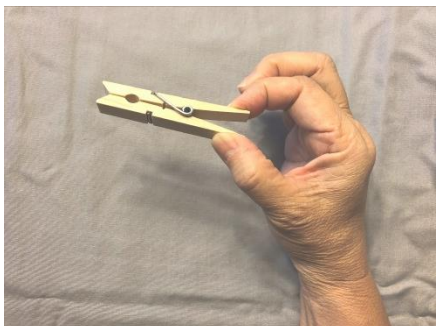


Fold a damp sponge in half and place it underneath your hand. Close your hand to grasp the sponge and hold.

You can also cut your sponge in half and bind the pieces together with a rubber band. Add more sponge pieces to increase the thickness of your sponge

Clothes-pin Pinch: 5-sec. hold x 10 reps

◊ *Tip to Tip Pinch*



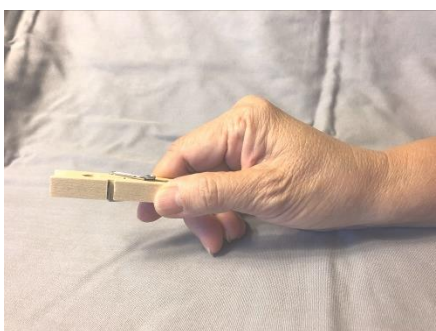
Hold the pin as if you're making an "O" with your thumb and index finger and squeeze.

◊ *Pad to Pad Pinch*



Hold the pin between the pads of your thumb and index finger, and squeeze.

◊ *Key Pinch*



Hold the pin between your thumb and side of index finger, as if you're holding a key, and squeeze.

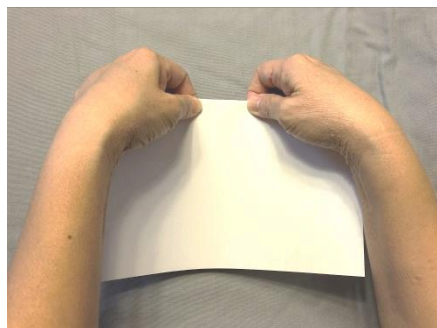
◊ *Nail Clipper Pinch*



Hold the pin with your thumb, index, and middle finger, as if you're using a nail clipper, and squeeze.

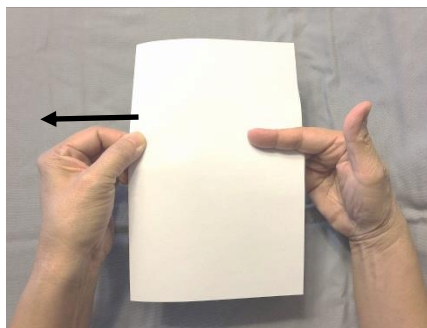
Paper Practice

◊ *Practice Your Folds*



Fold a sheet of paper in half by using your thumb and first 2 fingers to pinch the paper while sliding along the crease. **Continue folding the same sheet in half 4-5 times.**

◊ *Finger Adduction: 10-sec. hold x 10*



Place a sheet of paper between your fingers. Don't let your other hand pull the paper from between your fingers. **Repeat 10x** between each finger.

Rubber Band Resistance: 2 sets x 15 reps

⇒ If you are unable to actively move your thumb against the band, use your other hand to move your thumb in the desired direction and hold that position.

5-sec hold x 10

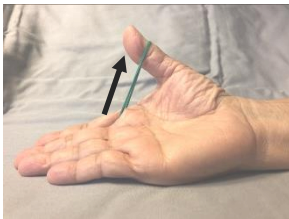
⇒ The further away the band is from the base of your fingers/thumb, the more challenging it gets.

◇ Thumb Abduction

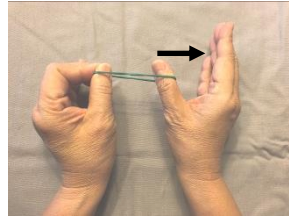


With your palm facing up, raise your thumb towards you and **hold**.

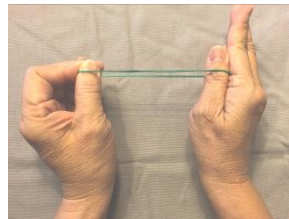
Stabilize fingers with your other hand if needed.



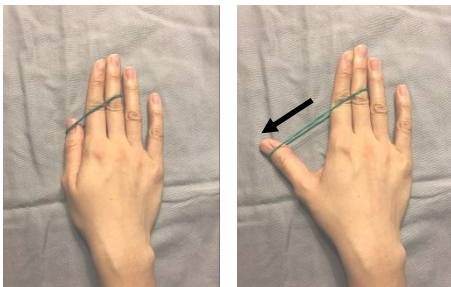
◇ Thumb Adduction



With your hand positioned as if you're grabbing a cup, move your thumb towards the base of your index finger and **hold**.

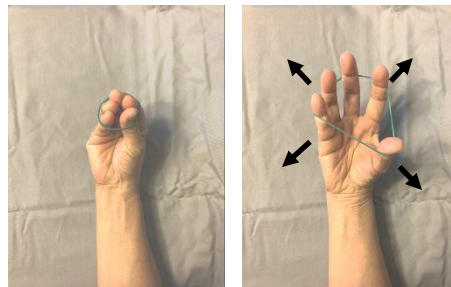


◇ Thumb Extension



With your palm facing down, move your thumb away from your index finger and **hold**.

◇ Finger Abduction



Spread your fingers apart as far as you can and **hold**.

Have Fun with Your Exercises!

⇒ Mancala is a fun way to practice grabbing many small pieces at once into your hand.

⇒ Scrabble or doing a jigsaw puzzle practices picking up flatter objects between your fingers.

⇒ Playing cards is good exercises for manipulating thin objects with your fingers

⇒ Use a coloring book and some larger markers to work on holding a writing utensil while controlling your hand/wrist for writing.

⇒ Suggestion: To decrease the workload from your hand/wrist with writing, try incorporating your elbow and shoulder into some of the movements!