

Physiotherapy Department

Inflammatory Arthritis Exercises

Why Exercise?

- To improve or maintain the range of movement in each joint.
- To improve or maintain the strength of your muscles.
- To help prevent deformities.
- To help reduce stiffness after rest or sleep.

Exercises need to be done on a daily basis. Your therapist may modify some of the exercises in this leaflet to make them more specific to you.

It is a misconception to think that exercise is the same as activities such as housework, climbing stairs or playing sport. Exercises are important to address your body's specific needs.

How much exercise should I do?

When joints are stiff or inflamed they will feel sore when you start to move them. This gets easier with gentle repetition of movement.

This type of exercise is helpful to do after rest or sleep.

Joints need muscles to support them. Exercises to improve strength are better done when you have more energy and feel less stiff. It is normal to feel muscle ache after exercise. This will settle gradually.

There are different types of exercise, each with an important role.

1. Range of Movement Exercises

These are to maintain the normal movement of a joint or to try and restore movement if it has been lost. They can be used to reduce stiffness at any time. This will help to prevent loss of range and deformity and minimise morning stiffness.

Ease into the movement gradually over a minimum of 3 repetitions until the stiffness eases.



Sitting

Roll your head forward until you feel a stretch behind your neck.

Uncurl slowly to return.

Hold approx. 5 seconds.



Sitting

Bend your head sideways as far as is comfortable.

Hold approx. 5 seconds



Sitting

Turn your head to one side until you feel a stretch.

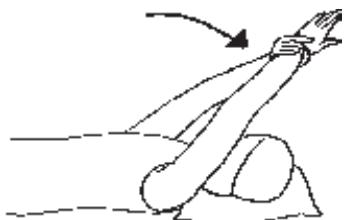
Hold approx. 5 seconds.

Repeat on other side.



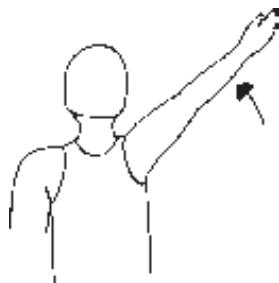
Sit at a table

Start and finish the exercise with an upright posture. Place both hands on a towel and slide the towel away from you.



Lying on your back with elbows straight.

Use one arm to lift the other arm up until you feel slight pain or restriction.



Stand or sit

Lift your arm up sideways with thumb leading the way.



Sit or stand

Keep upper arms close to the sides and elbows at right angles.

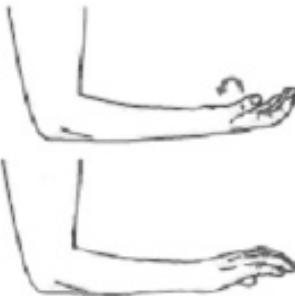
Turn forearms outwards.



Reach hands to back of head.



Reach hands to behind back



Forearm rotation

Turn palm up

Turn palm down

Repeat a few times until the movement feels easier.



Elbow bend

Stand up straight and lower your arm to one side.

Bend your arm slowly upwards so your hand is touching your shoulder.

Hold for 5 seconds.

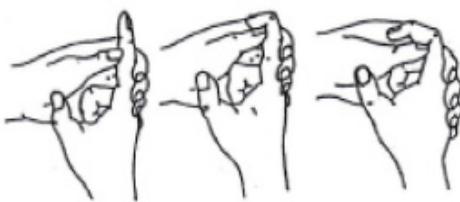
Shoulders, elbows and wrist



Hands and wrists – start by placing your palms together, elbow resting at your sides. Check that the heels of your palms and all your fingers touch.



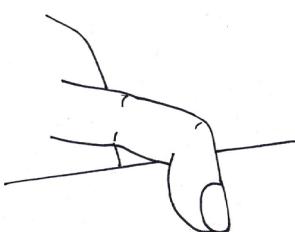
Hold your hand over the edge of a table or chair arm
lower your hand down as far as you can then extend upwards as far as you can.
Hold for 5 seconds each way.



Using your other hand to stabilize the middle section of your finger, bend and straighten the top joint only. Then move down to stabilize the bottom part of the finger and bend at the middle joint only. Repeat for each finger and the thumb.



Hold fingers and wrist straight.
Bend wrist first towards the little finger and then towards the thumb.



Put your forearm on a table.
First bend your fingertips, then the next joint followed by the fist. Straighten fingers.



Forearm supported on a table with palm facing down.
Bend your wrist and knuckles. Keep your fingers straight. Then straighten your wrist and knuckles.



Hold all fingers straight.
Make a big circle with your thumb clockwise and anticlockwise.
Repeat up to 10 times.



Lying on your back.

Bend your knee by sliding your heel towards your bottom.

Hold for 5 seconds and release to slide into straightened position again.



Lying on your back.

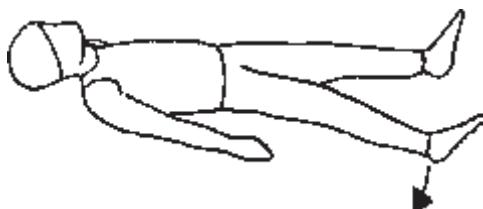
Bend the leg to be stretched towards your chest and hold onto the knee with both hands.

Alternatively, you can hold behind your knee. Pull your knee towards your abdomen keeping your head on a pillow. It may help to use a towel or a scarf as a sling to assist the movement. Hold for 5 seconds and release slowly, lowering your foot down first before straightening your leg.



Hip rotation.

Lying on your back turn your whole leg outwards and inwards gently (imagine your foot as a pointer on a dial). Repeat several times.



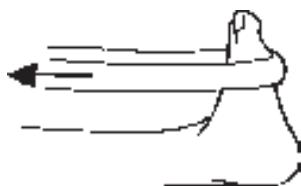
Lying on your back, slide your leg sideways until you feel a stretch.

It may help to put a bin liner on your leg to assist the sliding action.



Sitting or lying.

Rotate your ankle. Change directions.



Sit with one leg straight out in front of you.

Put a towel or scarf around your foot.

Gently pull the scarf and feel the stretch in your calf.

Hold approx. 5 seconds



Sitting with your foot on the floor.

Shorten your foot by tightening the muscles on the sole of your foot.

Keep your toes pushed straight against the floor.

2. Strengthening Exercises

These are to increase the strength of the muscles. This helps to provide stamina for you to perform everyday tasks such as climbing stairs.

There are two kinds of strengthening exercise, static and active.

Repeat any specific exercise slowly until you feel a mild fatigue. Once daily will usually be enough. Examples of each are given below.

Static Exercise



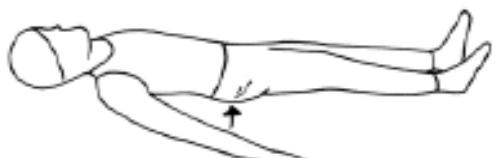
Arms and shoulders – stand up straight beside a wall with your upper arm, elbow, forearm and back of your hand against the wall. Gently push your entire arm against the wall as if to push the wall away.



Wrist and hands – sit on a chair with your arms resting on a table. Gently push the entire forearm and hand down onto the table. Hold for seconds. Strengthen your grip by squeezing a small object such as a ball of socks. Hold for 5 second intervals and repeat as tolerated.



Knees – lie or sit with your back supported. Gently push your knee down onto the surface and pull toes up towards you. Hold for a few seconds.



Buttocks – sit or lie flat on your back and squeeze the buttock muscles together. Hold for a few seconds.

What to do in the event of your joint becoming inflamed

From time to time for whatever reason, one or several joints may become hot, tender and acutely painful. This is a sign of inflammation, and to allow this to settle the joint may need to be rested more than normal. However, to prevent stiffness and maintain the movement, each joint should be gently moved throughout its available range daily. Measures also need to be taken locally to reduce the swelling and pain.

Heat

The use of heat can help with pain and muscle relaxation. To protect your skin from heat burns, wrap the item in a (few layers of) towel. Leave in place for 10-15 minutes. It can be reapplied after 2 hours if you wish.

Examples of heat application:

- Warm shower or bath
- Bowl of warm water (for hands and feet)
- Hot water bottle (do not use boiling water)
- Wheat bag (heat in microwave to comfortable temperature before use)
- Heat pad

Do not sit next to a fire to warm the area.

Heat packs should not be used on a joint or area of skin that is very inflamed or in the first 48-72 hours after an injury.

It is normal for the skin to become pink with either heat or ice, however, if you experience discomfort or a burning sensation remove the item immediately.

Please be aware that if you have circulatory problems, poor skin sensation or if you have diabetic neuropathy, please do not apply heat or cold to the affected area. Please seek medical advice if you feel at all unsure, or have any questions.

Cold

The use of ice can help with pain and inflammation. To protect the skin from an ice burn, place the ice pack in a wet towel. Leave in place for 10-15 minutes. It can be reapplied after 2 hours if you wish.

Examples of cold application:

- Bowl of cold water (for hands or feet)
- Cold, damp towel or flannel
- Bag of frozen peas
- Frozen gel pack or wheat bag
- For a small area of your body (e.g. fingers, thumb or toe) wrap an ice cube in a cloth and massage it over the area until it melts (5-10 minutes)

Contrast Bathing

Alternating between heat and cold is another effective way to reduce inflammation

1. Place heat on the affected area (under heat) or place in warm water for 1 minute
2. Then place cold on the affected area (under cold) or place in cold water for 2 minutes
3. Repeat this process 5 times, for a total of 15 minutes
4. Always finish in cold water and then dry the area thoroughly

Please note: It is normal for the skin to become pink with either heat or ice, however, if you experience discomfort or a burning sensation remove the item immediately.

Physiotherapy Website:

<http://www.cht.nhs.uk/services/clinical-services/physiotherapy-outpatients/patient-careinformation/>

QR Code:

Scan the QR code below to take you to our website.



If you have any comments about this leaflet or the service you have received you can contact :

Physiotherapy Department
Huddersfield Royal Infirmary

Telephone: 01484 342434

Booking Office: 01484 728941

www.cht.nhs.uk

If you would like this information in another format or language contact the above.

Potřebujete-li tyto informace v jiném formátu nebo jazyce,
obratte se prosím na výše uvedené oddělení

Jeżeli są Państwo zainteresowani otrzymaniem tych
informacji w innym formacie lub wersji językowej,
prosimy skontaktować się z nami, korzystając z ww.
danych kontaktowych

ਕਿਸੀ ਵਿਚ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਪ੍ਰਾਕੁਪ ਨਾਂ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿੱਚ ਲੈਣਾ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ,
ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਉਪਰੋਕਤ ਵਿਭਾਗ ਵਿੱਚ ਜਾਂਗੇ ਨਾਲ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰੋ।

اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات کسی اور فارمیٹ ٹیڈیاں ملے، درکار ہو، تو
ہر ایسے مہر باہم مندرجہ بالا شعبے میں ہم سے رابطہ کریں۔

"إذا احتجت الحصول على هذه المعلومة بشكل مختلف أو مترجمة إلى لغة مختلفة فيرجى منك الاتصال بالقسم
المذكور أعلاه"