

Information and exercise sheet

Osteoarthritis

If you have osteoarthritis, it might be tempting to avoid using joints that are painful. However, exercise is important, as it keeps your joints working properly and can improve your pain.

This sheet has examples of two different types of exercise you can do to help your joints – stretching and strengthening exercises. Stretching exercises maintain and improve the range of movement of your joints. Strengthening exercises build up your muscles, which can take pressure off your joints and reduce pain. Swimming, cycling and walking, which are low impact, are good for people with osteoarthritis too.

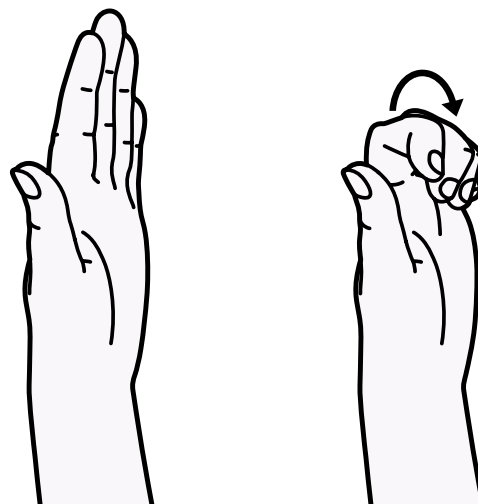
Many people worry that exercise will make their pain worse. Try to think about times of the day when you feel better, and do some exercise then. If you take pain medication, time exercise around this. It's ok to take a painkiller before you start. It might feel uncomfortable while you're exercising, but this doesn't mean that you're causing any damage. You might feel stiff and achy the next day, but don't let this put you off – this should get better after a few days, and will happen less as your body gets used to exercise.

Exercises

Many people find the following exercises helpful. If you need to, adjust the position so that it's comfortable. Try to do these exercises regularly. Do each one a few times to start with, to get used to them, and gradually increase how much you do.

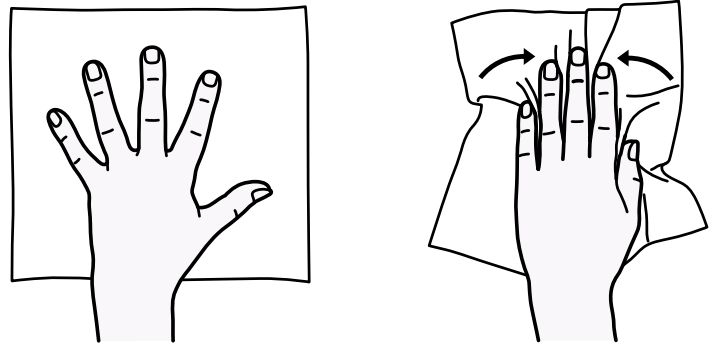
1. Finger bend

Hold your hand out, with your fingers straight. Then bend the fingers down at the first 2 joints and straighten again. Try to repeat this 10 times with each hand, 3 times a day.



2. Finger strengthening

Put the palm of your hand on a towel on a table, with your fingers apart. Pull your fingers together while pushing your hand down into the table, bunching up the towel between your fingers. Try to repeat this 10 times with each hand, 3 times a day.



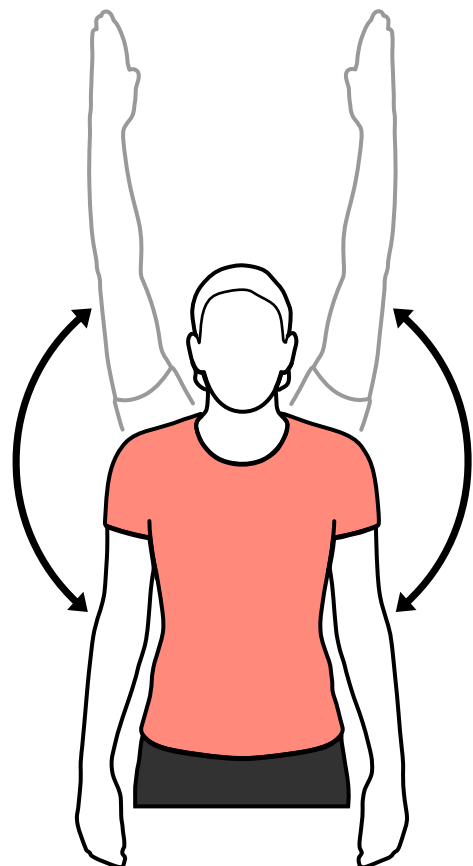
3. Arm lifts

Place your hands behind your head so your elbows are pointing to the sides and pressed back as far as you can. Hold for 5 seconds. Then place your hands behind your back, again keeping your elbows pointing out and pressed back as far as you can. Hold for 5 seconds. Do each movement 5 times.



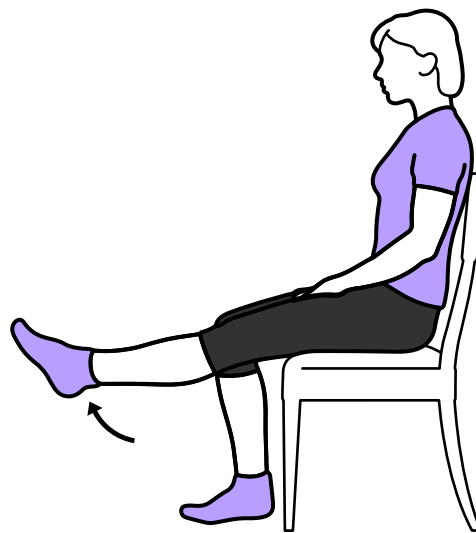
4. Arm stretch

Stand with your arms relaxed at your sides. Raise your arms as far as you can and hold for 5 to 10 seconds. Lower your arms and repeat the movement 5 times. You can do this exercise by raising your arms either in front of you, or to the side. Doing some of each will stretch more muscles.



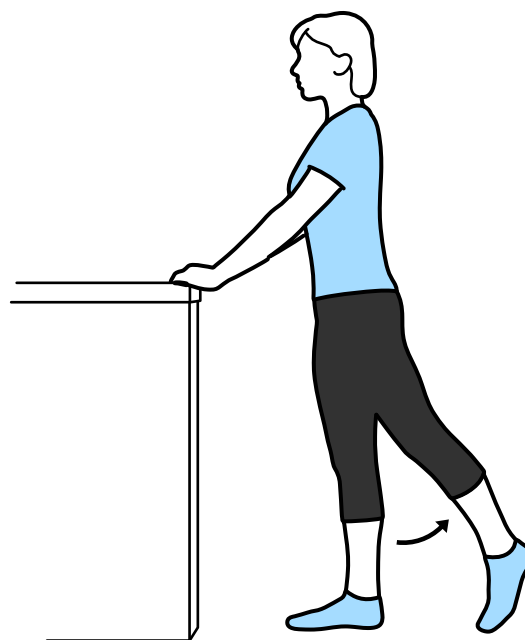
5. Straight-leg raise

Sit in a chair, with your back straight, shoulders back and head level. Straighten and raise one leg. Hold for a slow count to 10, then slowly put your leg on the floor. Repeat this at least 10 times for each leg. As the exercise becomes easier, try it with light ankle weights and pull your toes towards you, so you feel a stretch at the back of your lower leg.



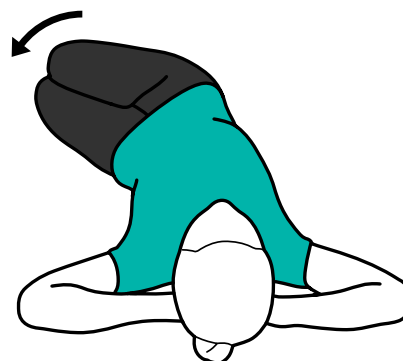
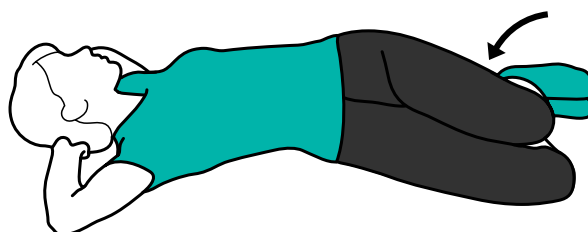
6. Hip extension

Move your leg backwards, keeping your knee straight. Clench your buttock tightly and hold for 5 seconds. Don't lean forwards. Hold onto a chair or work surface for support.



7. Knee rolls

Lie on your back, with bent knees and your feet together. Roll your knees to one side, keeping your shoulders flat on the bed or floor, and hold the position for 10 seconds. Roll your knees back to the start position, then over to the other side and repeat. Do this exercise 3 times on each side.



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