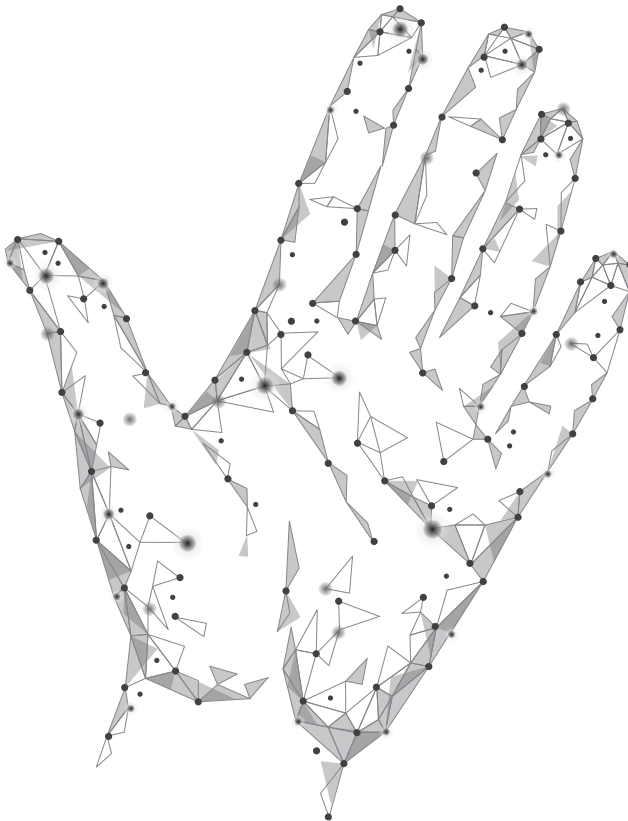


Information about
**Looking after your hand
following nerve injury**



Following trauma to your nerves, you may have reduced movement of your hand. As you are waiting for your nerves to recover it is important to try to keep all of the joints in your hand supple. If your nerves recover, but your joints are **stiff** this can make it difficult to regain good use of your hand. If the joints in your hand have become stiff, they may feel uncomfortable to stretch.

Remember this does not mean you are causing harm.

What you can do to make this easier

Sensation

If you have reduced feeling in your hand, please take care when near hot or sharp objects. If your hand feels very sensitive, please speak to your therapist who can suggest some desensitisation techniques that may help.

Warm your hand

If possible warm your hand in a basin of water to heat your soft tissues before you start exercising. Research shows that when you warm up your joints and muscles it improves circulation and can help stiff joints relax. This may help to make them less painful when stretching.

Massage

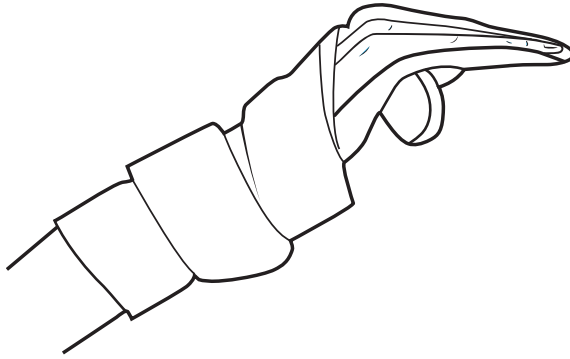
If your hand is swollen, try massaging your hand with a plain moisturiser. Gently push from the tips of the fingers along the forearm to try to reduce the swelling. If your hand is very swollen your therapist may suggest wearing a light compression glove. Massage also helps to keep the condition of your skin good as the skin may feel dry as your hand sweat less.

Swelling

To reduce swelling try raising your hand above your heart or head, if possible, whilst massaging. If you are able to make an open and closed fist with your hand raised this can help to push the swelling along too.

Night Splint

In some occasions we may give you a night splint. The purpose of this is to support your hand in a position that keeps your soft tissues at full length and prevents any contractures (bending in) of your fingers. If you have a resting splint remember to remove it frequently to do your hand exercises.



Looking after your hand following nerve injury

Exercising

If you have no movement in your hand or wrist it is important to try to keep the joints from getting stiff. Stretch each finger at least four times per day:

Finger stretches: Try to do these with your fingers relaxed and your wrist straight as this will make it easier.



Large Knuckle
Bend the Metacarpal
Phalangeal joint finger (MCP)



Middle Knuckle
Bend the Proximal
Interphalangeal (PIP)



Tip of Finger
Bend the Distal
Interphalangeal (DIP)



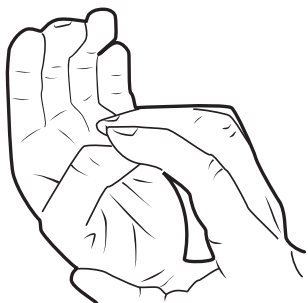
All Finger Joints
Bend all of the joints of the
finger to make a composite
fist (Full fist)



Finger Extension

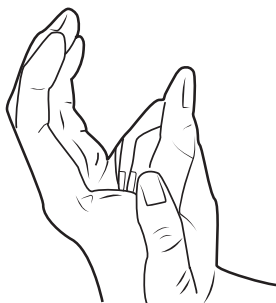
Support the base of finger and stretch middle and tip straight

Thumb Stretches:



Thumb Flexion

Stretch the thumb into the palm



Thumb Extension

Stretch the thumb away from the palm



Thumb Abduction

Stretch the thumb to the side of the hand

Looking after your hand following nerve injury

Wrist stretches:

Wrist Extension



(A)

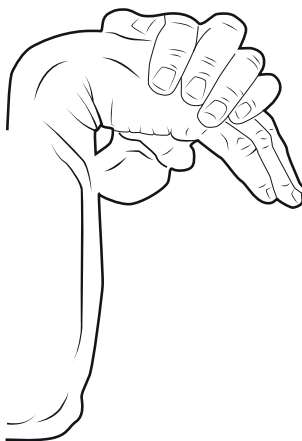


(B)

Place your hand flat on the table and move your forearm up (image A) or use your other hand to stretch your wrist back (image B).

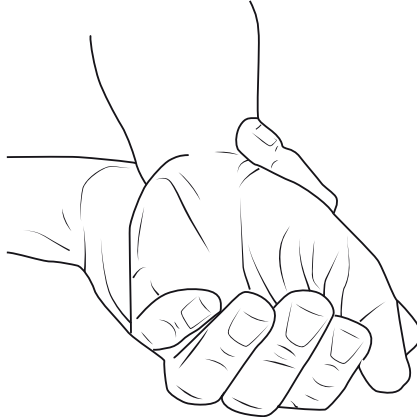
Wrist flexion

Place your elbow on the table and use your other hand to push on the back of the affected hand.



Supination (palm facing up)

Use your other hand to turn your forearm so the palm is facing up.



Pronation (palm facing down)

Use your other hand to turn your forearm so the palm is facing down.



Everyday activities

The best method of reducing stiffness in your hand is to try to use them as much as you are able to. If you have a little movement but not enough to hold onto something, speak to your therapist about providing an aid to make your grip easier e.g. foam handles to make grips thicker. You can also buy grip aids such as utensil straps which can help with your grip. If your grip is very poor, but your shoulder and elbow movement is improving, trying to use your weak hand in a two handed task. Using your hand as a support helps your brain to engage with your limb and can also help to improve shoulder and elbow movement. Please see the images below:



Plastazote
foam tubing



Utensil Strap



Supported
Grip



Two handed
grip

The exercise images were used with kind permission of NHS Lanarkshire.

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