



**Dr Jonathan Herald**

Shoulder, Elbow, Knee Surgeon  
MBBS, FRACS (Orth), FAOrthA



**Orthoclinic**  
Orthopaedic Clinic Sydney

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## Post-Op Care Instructions and Exercises for Hand Surgery

Patient Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Findings

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Operation Performed

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### POST OPERATIVE CARE

- Sling:** Your affected arm will be placed in a fitted sling. This is to support your arm and elevate your hand while the block has numbed your arm. You can remove the sling when feeling returns to your hand.
- At Home:** You can use your hand for light activities such as writing, typing and using a knife and fork. It is important to do hand exercises 4-5 times per day to straighten your wrist and fingers to keep your joints mobile and strong.
- Dressings:** Keep the outer bandage on for 1 to 2 days if it stays dry and clean. After this you can remove it. To keep the outer bandage dry please shower with a plastic bag. Once removed the underneath dressings are waterproof but if soiled see me or your GP to get them changed as soon as possible.
- Sutures:** You will have buried, dissolving skin sutures that do not need to be removed.
- Analgesia:** A prescription has been provided by either myself, my assistant or my anaesthetist for analgesics. Please be aware that codeine containing products such as Panadeine Forte may cause constipation and drowsiness and should be used sparingly and with a high fibre diet e.g. Metamucil.



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**Rehabilitation:** Post-operative physiotherapy and home exercises are very important after surgery. Please follow the instructions shown. You can use this as a referral to formal physiotherapy which should begin as soon as you leave the hospital. Without daily exercises you may end up with a stiff hand. Please take your surgical booklet with you to your physiotherapy appointment.

**Follow-up:** You will also need to contact Orthopaedic Clinic Sydney on 02 9233 3946 to arrange a follow-up appointment to see me at around 10 to 14 days. If it is not possible to see me, please see your GP at this time.

**Driving a car:** You are not allowed to drive a car home after today's procedure. You are not safe to drive a car while your arm is in a sling. After removing the sling you may drive if you feel safe.

**When to Worry:**

- If you think you have an infection
- Abnormal bleeding, a wound problem
- A bandage that is too tight and cutting off your circulation
- New numbness and tingling or any other emergency please contact the rooms immediately or failing that go back to hospital or see your GP.

**Additional Instructions:**

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I look forward to seeing you again at your next appointment.

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Orthopaedic Surgeon



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## Therapeutic Exercise Program for Hand Surgery

To ensure that this exercise program is safe and effective for you, it should be performed under the supervision of a physiotherapist to best meet your rehabilitation goals.

### PURPOSE OF PROGRAM

A therapeutic exercise program is recommended by Dr Herald to prevent post-operative hand stiffness. Exercises may help to reduce the swelling of the hand and wrist.

They may be incorporated with bracing and/or splinting, medication, and activity changes to relieve symptoms.

## Stretching Exercises

### 1. MEDIAL NERVE GLIDES

**Equipment needed:** Hot and Cold Packs

**Repetitions**

10 to 15 reps a day

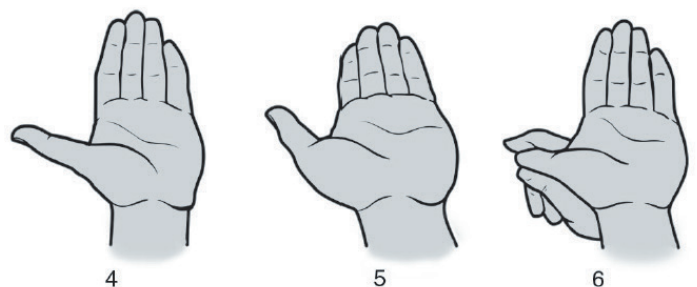
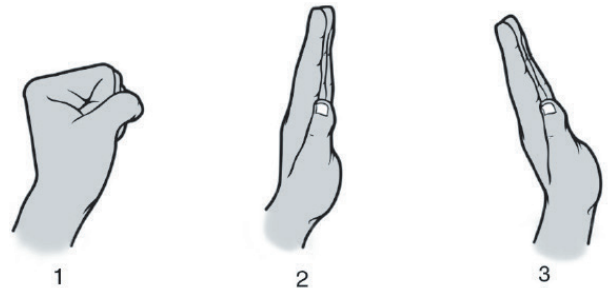
**Days per week**

6 to 7

**Additional instructions:** Apply heat to your hand for 15 minutes before performing these exercises. After completing the exercises, apply a bag of crushed ice or frozen peas to your hand for 20 minutes to prevent inflammation. Hold each position below for 3 to 7 seconds.

#### Step-by-step directions:

- Make a fist with your thumb outside your fingers (1)
- Extend your fingers while keeping your thumb close to the side of your hand (2)
- Keep your fingers straight and extend your wrist (bend your hand backward toward your forearm) (3)
- Keep your fingers and wrist in position and extend your thumb (4)
- Keep your fingers, wrist, and thumb extended and turn your forearm palm up (5)
- Keep your fingers, wrist, and thumb extended and use your other hand to gently stretch the thumb (6)



**Tip**

Do not put too much pressure on your thumb in position 6.



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## Stretching Exercises

### 2. TENDON GLIDES

**Equipment needed:** Hot and Cold Packs

#### Repetitions

5-10 reps, 2 to 3x a day

#### Days per week

Progress as tolerated

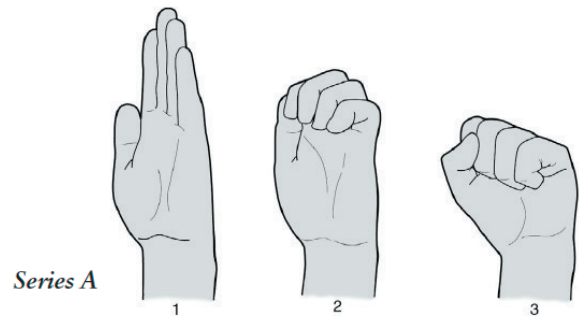
**Additional instructions:** Apply heat to your hand for 15 minutes before performing these exercises. After completing the exercises, apply a bag of crushed ice or frozen peas to your hand for 20 minutes to prevent inflammation. Hold each position below for 3 to 7 seconds.

Two series of tendon gliding exercises are provided here. Follow these general instructions for both series:

- Proceed from position 1 through 3 in sequence
- Hold each position for 3 seconds
- As the exercises become easier to complete, increase the number of repetitions, or how many times per day you do them.

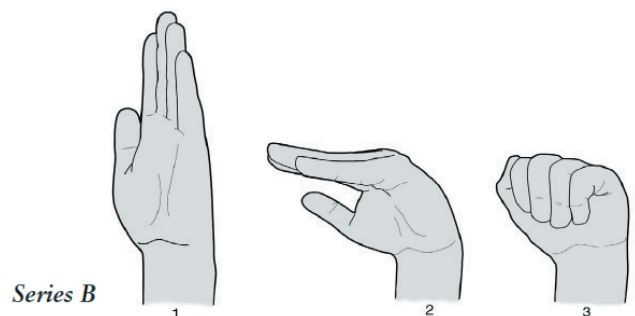
#### Step-by-step directions for Series A:

- With your hand in front of you and your wrist straight, fully straighten all of your fingers (1)
- Bend the tips of your fingers into the “hook” position with your knuckles pointing up (2)
- Make a tight fist with your thumb over your fingers (3)



#### Step-by-step directions for Series B:

- With your hand in front of you and your wrist straight, fully straighten all of your fingers (1)
- Make a “tabletop” with your fingers by bending at your bottom knuckle and keeping the fingers straight (2)
- Bend your fingers at the middle joint, touching your fingers to your palm (3)



#### Tip

These movements may cause a gentle pulling, but should not cause increased pain.



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## Stretching Exercises

### 3. WRIST EXTENSION STRETCH

**Equipment needed:** None

**Repetitions**

5 reps, 4x a day

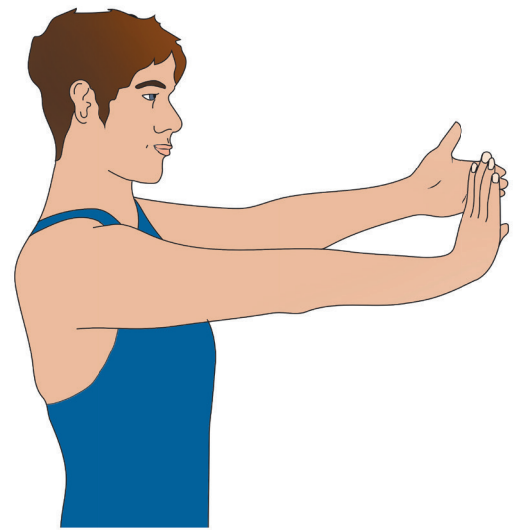
**Days per week**

5 to 7

**Additional instructions:** This stretch should be done throughout the day, especially before activity. After recovery, this stretch should be included as part of a warm-up to activities that involve gripping.

#### Step-by-step directions:

- Straighten your arm and bend your wrist back as if signalling someone to “stop.”
- Use your opposite hand to apply gentle pressure across the palm and pull it toward you until you feel a stretch on the inside of your forearm.
- Hold the stretch for 15 seconds.
- Repeat 5 times, then perform this stretch on the other arm.



**Tip** Do not lock your elbow

### 4. WRIST FLEXION STRETCH

**Equipment needed:** None

**Repetitions**

5 reps, 4x a day

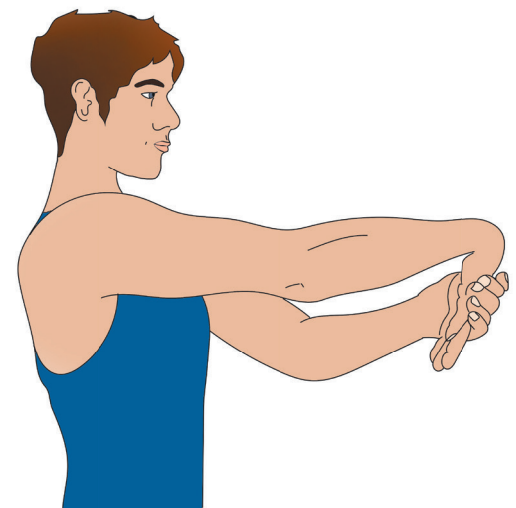
**Days per week**

5 to 7

**Additional instructions:** This stretch should be done throughout the day, especially before activity. After recovery, this stretch should be included as part of a warm-up to activities that involve gripping.

#### Step-by-step directions:

- Straighten your arm with your palm facing down and bend your wrist so that your fingers point down.
- Gently pull your hand towards your body until you feel a stretch on the outside of your forearm
- Hold the stretch for 15 seconds.
- Repeat 3 times, then perform this stretch on the other arm.



**Tip** Do not lock your elbow