Upper Body Exercises: Back, Shoulders, Arms, Wrists, & Hands

The goal of these exercises is to regain or maintain function and strength of your upper body. To help increase your strength, some of these exercises also include the use of an object or weight.

Your occupational therapist has designed these exercises to meet your specific needs. For best results, please perform each exercise as shown.

If your symptoms change or become worse when you are exercising, stop the activity. If the symptoms persist or are bothersome, call your doctor’s office.

**ELBOW - Extension (Active)**

Lying on back or sitting, raise elbow up and out. Straighten arm without moving shoulder. Can use other hand to hold upper arm steady. Hold ______ seconds.
Repeat ______ times. Do these exercises ______ times per day.
ELBOW - Extension (Resistive)

Hold can weighing 12 to 32 ounces. Point elbow up and out, and straighten arm without moving shoulder. Hold ______ seconds. Lower slowly by bending elbow. Can do this lying down. Repeat ______ times. Do these exercises ______ times per day.

ELBOW - Accessory Motions (Active)

Keeping elbow at side, make circular motions clockwise, then counterclockwise. Do not move wrist or shoulder. Repeat ______ times. Do these exercises ______ times per day.

FOREARM - Pronation/Supination (Resistive)

Hold hammer weighing 3 to 8 ounces and rotate palm up and down. Keep elbow flexed at side with wrist straight. Repeat ______ times. Do these exercises ______ times per day.
SCAPULA - Elevation (Active)

Shrug shoulders up, breathing in. Relax, breathing out. Repeat ______ times. Do these exercises ______ times per day.

SCAPULA - Depression (Active)

Start with erect posture. Lower shoulders. Hold ______ seconds. Repeat ______ times. Do these exercises ______ times per day.
FINGER - MP Flexion (Assistive)

With hand resting on table, slide fingers to bend at large knuckles. Use other hand to help if needed. Hold 5 seconds. Repeat ______ times. Do these exercises ______ times per day.

FINGER - MP Flexion (Active Isolated)

Bend finger at large knuckle, keeping other fingers straight. Do not bend tips. Repeat ______ times. Do these exercises ______ times per day.

FINGER - MP Flexion (Active With Wrist Extension)

With wrist cocked up, touch fingertips to base of palm. Repeat ______ times. Do these exercises ______ times per day.

Activity: Hold a handful of coins in this position.
FINGER - MP Extension (Active)

With palm on table, straighten fingers completely at large knuckles, and lift fingers off table. Hold 3 seconds.
Repeat ______ times. Do these exercises ______ times per day.
Activity: Tap fingers one at a time on table.

FINGER - PIP Flexion (Active)

Keeping large knuckles straight, bend the middle joint of affected finger, or of all fingers, as far as possible. Hold ______ seconds.
Repeat ______ times. Do these exercises ______ times per day.

FINGER - Flexion / Extension (Active Controlled With Wrist Flexion)

With wrist held at ______ ° flexion, straighten and bend fingers.
Repeat ______ times. Do these exercises ______ times per day.
FINGER - Flexor Tendon Gliding (Active Hook Fist)

With fingers and knuckles straight, bend middle and tip joints. Do not bend large knuckles.
Repeat ______ times. Do these exercises ______ times per day.

FINGER - Flexor Tendon Gliding (Active Full Fist)

Straighten all fingers, then make a fist, bending all joints.
Repeat ______ times. Do these exercises ______ times per day.

FINGER - Flexor Tendon Gliding (Active Straight Fist)

Start with fingers straight. Bend knuckles and middle joints.
Keep fingertip joints straight to touch base of palm.
Repeat ______ times. Do these exercises ______ times per day.
FINGER - Abduction / Adduction (Active)

With hand flat on table, spread all fingers apart, then bring them together as close as possible.
Repeat ______ times. Do these exercises ______ times per day.

FINGER - Radial Finger Walk (Active to Counteract Ulnar Deviation)

With palm flat on table and held steady, lift or slide fingers one by one toward thumb. Hold fingers in position and lift entire hand up from table to reposition for next repetition.
Repeat ______ times. Do these exercises ______ times per day.

FINGER - Composite Flexion (Active Extensor Stretch)

Curl fingers into fist, bend wrist down, and straighten elbow.
Hold ______ seconds.
Repeat ______ times. Do these exercises ______ times per day.
Health Information Resources

For more information, visit one of Northwestern Memorial Hospital’s Health Learning Centers. These state-of-the-art health libraries are located on the third floor of the Galter Pavilion and on the first floor of the Prentice Women’s Hospital. Health information professionals are available to help you find the information you need and provide you with personalized support at no charge. You may contact the Health Learning Centers by calling 312-926-LINK (5465) or by sending an e-mail to hlc@nmh.org.

For additional information about Northwestern Memorial Hospital, please visit our Web site at www.nmh.org.