

FINGER FROLICS for circulations

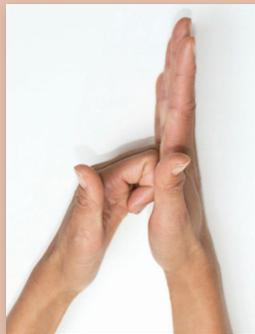
In many autoimmune conditions the small joints in fingers can become inflamed, stiff and painful. In conditions such as scleroderma changes in the appearance and flexibility of the fingers and hands can be one of the first symptoms experienced. Colour changes from pink to white, blue and red can indicate the presence of Raynaud's phenomenon a disease that can interfere with blood flow causing pain, heat and in some severe cases, ulcerations. In scleroderma, the small joints can become extremely inflamed and painful preventing movement; the collagen can build up in the skin layers forming scar tissue and leading to disfigurement of the fingers or contractures with stiffened digits.

To help prevent permanent damage and stiff joints, activate the circulation promoting blood flow, and increase healing capacity, the adoption of a daily movement and stretching exercise regime should be employed.

Remember safety first, don't overdo it, increase the number of repetitions slowly, don't over extend the stretches, keep warm and seek advice from your medical team if you have any injuries or cuts or ulcers that are not healing.

Protect your fingers and your core body from the cold and hydrate your skin well. Try to avoid harsh detergents, soaps and extremely cold or hot water as all of these can cause dryness and irritation. Most of all move your hands and fingers regularly to promote healthy blood flow and prevent long term problems.

Hand exercises



Bend your fingers into the palm of your hand and make a fist. Stretch all your fingers out.



Stretch your fingers out, separate your fingers and then bring them together again



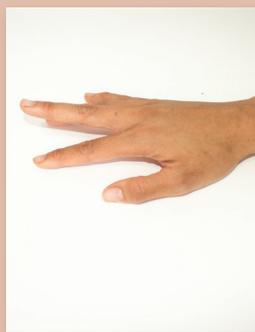
Touch your thumb to each finger in turn and then stretch out.



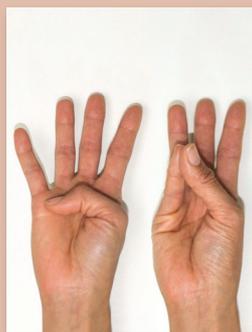
Put your hands together, (as if in prayer), then move your palms out to make a diamond shape keeping the wrists and the fingertips together - just moving the knuckle joint.



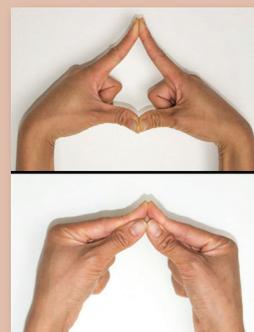
Walk your fingers across a table surface.



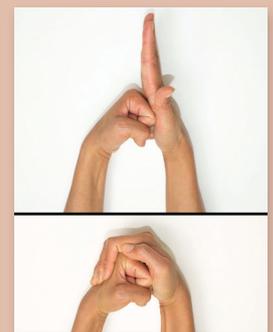
Place your hand flat on a table and lift your fingers one by one.



Bend your thumb inside the palm of your hand and move it toward the little finger



Put your two thumbs together and your index fingers and press them together. Repeat moving each finger pair toward and away from each other



Close your fingers into a fist and place them into your other palm rolling your fingers of the other hand over the fist then stretch out.

These exercises should be repeated several times daily. It is particularly helpful to awaken the fingers and hands by starting your 1st round of exercises whilst still warm and in bed. Try them when you are waiting for the kettle to boil, when you are stopped at traffic lights, or in line at the supermarket or just walking down the street. Just keep them moving and keep your fingers and hands in good health.

Dr Marline Squance

Adapted from information provided by Scleroderma Association of Portugal.