

HAND & WRIST REHAB

THE HAND & WRIST FUNCTION STARTER GUIDE

Restore motion. Build control. Return to daily function.

A practical educational guide to the strength, mobility and physical capacity that support comfortable movement.

01

KEEP MOTION

Use gentle, comfortable movement to limit unnecessary stiffness.

02

BUILD CONTROL

Strengthen the wrist, hand and thumb progressively.

03

RETRAIN TASKS

Return gradually to typing, gripping, lifting, tools or sport.

Inside: five starter exercises, coaching cues, progressions and a simple framework for building capacity.

WHY HAND & WRIST PAIN CAN HAPPEN

Pain is rarely explained by one factor. Symptoms can emerge when the demands placed on the region exceed what it is currently prepared to tolerate.

01

REPETITIVE DEMAND

Typing, gripping, tools, lifting, racquet sports and device use can increase cumulative load.

02

TENDON CAPACITY

Hand and wrist tendons transmit force during fine and powerful tasks.

03

MOBILITY

Stiffness after irritation or immobilization may alter how load is shared.

04

GRIP & PINCH

Reduced capacity can make ordinary tasks feel disproportionately demanding.

05

NERVE OR JOINT SYMPTOMS

Numbness, tingling, trauma or persistent swelling may indicate a problem needing evaluation.

KEY IDEA

The goal is not to avoid load forever. Find an appropriate starting point, monitor the response and progressively build capacity.

THE HAND & WRIST FOUNDATION

A useful rehabilitation plan considers the region as part of a larger movement system. These five areas provide a practical starting framework.

01	TENDON GLIDING Maintains differential finger motion.
02	WRIST MOTION Supports positioning for grip and daily tasks.
03	GRIP CAPACITY Builds tolerance for holding and carrying.
04	THUMB FUNCTION Supports pinch, dexterity and opposition.
05	TASK EXPOSURE Gradually restores typing, lifting, tools or sport demands.

Exercise selection should be individualized based on symptoms, health history, goals and current capacity.

5 EXERCISES FOR HAND & WRIST PAIN

These are examples that may fit within a broader rehabilitation program. They are not a universal treatment protocol.

1. TENDON GLIDES

Why: Finger motion and tendon excursion.

How: Move slowly through straight hand, hook fist, full fist and tabletop positions without forcing.

Start: 5–8 cycles, 1–2 times/day.

2. WRIST FLEXION / EXTENSION

Why: Comfortable wrist mobility.

How: With forearm supported, bend the wrist forward and backward through a comfortable range.

Start: 1–2 sets of 8–10 reps.

3. WRIST EXTENSION ISOMETRIC

Why: Early strength without joint movement.

How: Press the back of the hand into the opposite hand while keeping the wrist still.

Start: 4–5 holds of 10–20 sec.

4. THUMB OPPOSITION

Why: Thumb coordination and motion.

How: Touch the thumb to each fingertip, then slide toward the base of the small finger as comfortable.

Start: 5 controlled rounds.

5. SUBMAXIMAL GRIP

Why: Progressive hand strength.

How: Squeeze a soft ball at moderate effort without holding your breath or provoking symptoms.

Start: 5–8 holds of 5–10 sec.

FEATURED EXERCISE: TENDON GLIDES

This exercise offers a practical way to build controlled hand & wrist capacity. Use a comfortable range and appropriate starting level.

01	STRAIGHT Begin with fingers and thumb relaxed and straight.
02	HOOK Bend the middle and end finger joints while keeping the knuckles straighter.
03	FIST Gently curl into a full fist without squeezing hard.
04	TABLETOP Straighten the finger joints while keeping the knuckles bent.

COACHING CUES

Move with control. Keep breathing. Use a range and resistance that feel manageable, and avoid forcing through sharp or escalating symptoms.

REGRESS Smaller, pain-free motion	BASE Slow full sequence	PROGRESS Add task-specific dexterity work
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HOW TO PROGRESS

Progression should reflect the person in front of you—not simply the calendar. Advance one variable at a time and watch the response.

01	CONTROL Own the movement through a comfortable range and tempo.
02	VOLUME Gradually add repetitions, sets, hold time or total work.
03	RESISTANCE Add external load when the current level is well tolerated.
04	SPEED & COMPLEXITY Introduce faster or more complex movement when appropriate.
05	ACTIVITY-SPECIFIC DEMANDS Progress toward the work, recreation or sport demands that matter to you.

SIMPLE RESPONSE CHECK

Mild symptoms during exercise may be acceptable for some conditions if they remain manageable and return toward baseline afterward. A marked or lasting increase means the dose may need to change.

READY FOR A PLAN BUILT AROUND YOU?

ONLINE REHABILITATION CONSULTING | SPORTS MEDICINE | PERFORMANCE

Move beyond generic exercise lists.

Online rehabilitation consulting can help you understand your symptoms, choose an appropriate starting point, and build a progressive plan around your goals, equipment and schedule.

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WHEN TO SEEK PROMPT MEDICAL CARE

Seek appropriate care after major trauma or for severe or rapidly worsening pain, major swelling or deformity, inability to use the limb, fever or unexplained illness, new or progressive weakness, persistent numbness or tingling, loss of coordination, or other concerning symptoms.

EDUCATIONAL DISCLAIMER

This guide is for general educational purposes only and is not a substitute for individualized medical evaluation, diagnosis or treatment. Exercise selection and progression should be based on your health status, symptoms, history and goals. Consult a qualified healthcare professional before beginning a new exercise or rehabilitation program, particularly if you are currently experiencing pain or injury. Stop an exercise and seek appropriate guidance if symptoms are concerning or worsening. Online consultation availability and scope may depend on your location and individual needs.