

37 Hand Therapy Exercises for Stroke Recovery

October 2, 2015



Hand therapy exercises after stroke will help you [regain your fine motor skills](#) and finally get your hand back.

However, hand movement can be one of the most stubborn and difficult functions to recover, so it's important to experiment with all your options until you find the one that works best for you.

And just to be clear, this isn't a normal list labeled 1, 2, 3, 4, etc. Rather, it's a collection of every hand exercise that we've ever shared on the blog... ever.

Ready to dive into our ultimate list of hand therapy exercises for stroke recovery? Let's go!

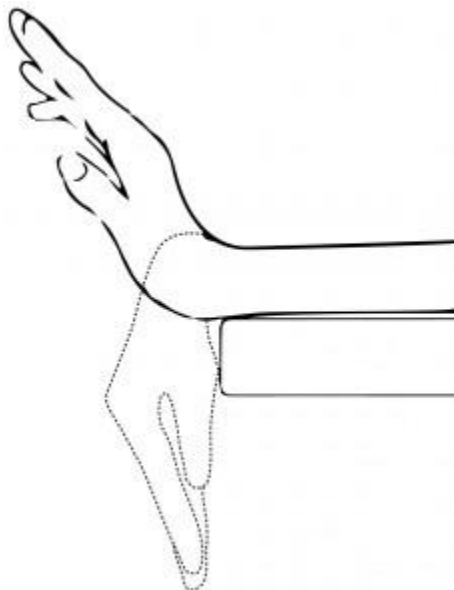
2 Hand Stretching Exercises

These stretching exercises can be practiced [passively or actively](#). For those with paralyzed hands, you can practice these stretching exercises passively by using your unaffected hand to help you complete the exercises.

This will help prevent [muscle stiffening](#) and encourage movement in your affected hand.

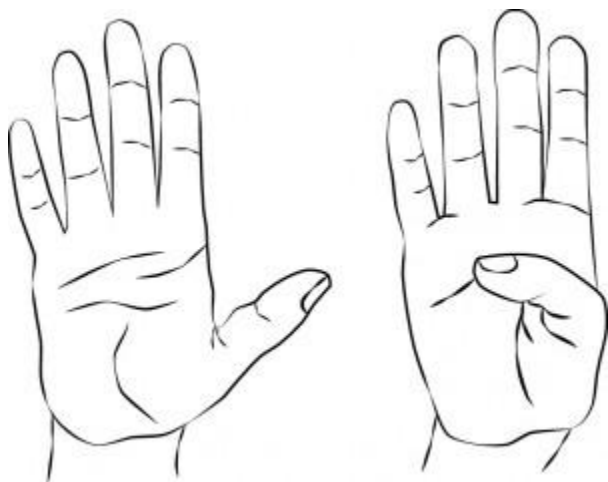
For those who do have some movement in their hand, you can practice these stretching exercises actively (meaning no assistance from your unaffected hand) as a good warm up activity.

Wrist Extension and Flexion



With your forearm on a table, let your hand hang off the side of the table with your palm down. Then, move your hand up and down, bending at your wrist. When you're done, repeat with your palm facing up.

Thumb Extension and Flexion



Start with your palm open, as if you were signaling the number 5. Then, practice moving your thumb over to your pinky side, as if you were signaling the number 4. Continue to move your thumb back and forth between these 2 positions.

6 Easy Hand Therapy Exercises

For those with some hand movement, try these simple tasks that involve common household items.

- Stacking coins

- Pinching clothespins
- Playing board games like chess or checkers
- Putting together a puzzle
- Playing the piano
- Playing a virtual piano app

These exercises can get boring fast though, so if you're looking for some effective, musical fun, we recommend our MusicGlove hand therapy device.

2 Rotation and Shift Hand Exercises

Once you've mastered the complex hand manipulation exercise, you'll be ready to work on performing rotation and shift exercises.

Take a pen, and try rotating it around your middle finger, using your thumb, index, and ring finger to help you manipulate the pen. Think about twirling the pen around your fingers.

Then, practice a shifting movement by holding the pen in a writing position (in between your thumb, index, and middle finger) and shifting the pen forward until you're holding the end of the pen.

Then, shift the pen back until you're holding the tip once again. Think about inching your fingers along the pen.

1 Advanced Hand Exercise

For this complex hand exercise, gather 10 small objects (like uncooked beans) and practice picking them up with your fingers. But instead of immediately setting them down, try holding all of the objects in your palm (of the same hand) while you continue to pick the rest up.

You'll be working on pinching movements with your index finger and thumb while the rest of your fingers work to keep the objects in your palm.

Then, once all the objects are in your hand, practice putting them down one by one. You'll use your thumb to move each object from your palm down to your index finger and thumb, and then place the object back down onto the table.

This requires a great deal of coordination and control, so if you can't get it at first, remember that it's a difficult task and you'll get better with practice.

8 Hand Therapy Ball Exercises

[Hand therapy balls](#) are the cheapest tools you can use to regain hand movement after stroke. (Aside from stacking pennies...)

Try using a soft one if you're still developing strength, and use something more firm if you're focused more on regaining coordination. Hand therapy balls usually come in different thicknesses so that you can keep yourself consistently challenged.



POWER GRIP



PINCH



THUMB EXTENSION

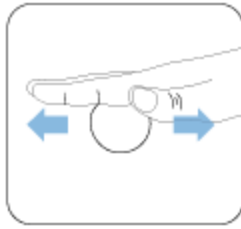


TABLE ROLL



FINGER FLEXION



THUMB ROLL



FINGER SQUEEZE



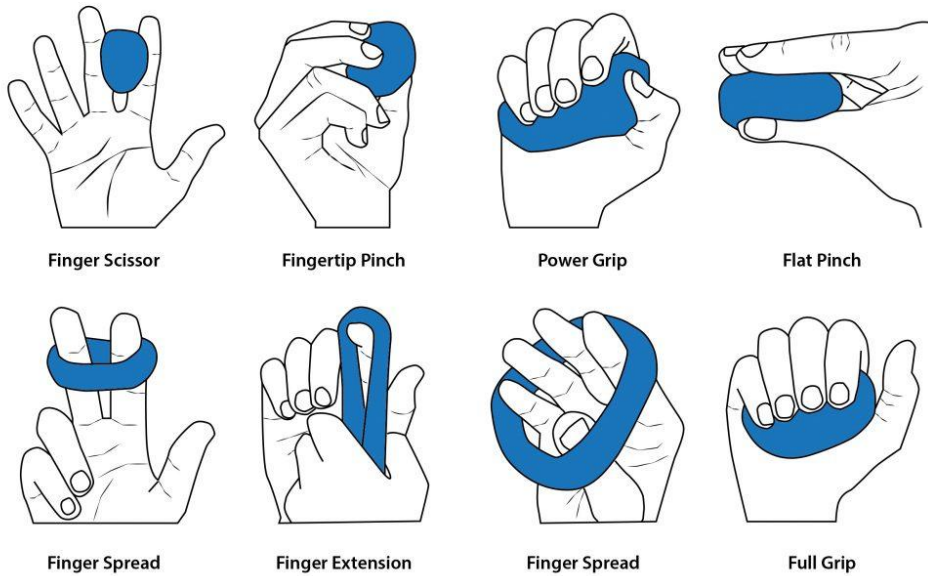
THUMB OPPOSITION

1. Power Grip – Squeeze the hand therapy ball with your fingers and thumb. Focus on pressing the pads and tips of your fingers into the ball.
2. Pinch – Pinch the ball with fingers and thumb extended. Press your fingers down into the top of the ball and your thumb upward on the bottom of the ball.
3. Thumb Extension – Roll the ball up and down your palm by flexing (making your thumb bent) and extending (making your thumb straight). This will move the ball up and down your hand in a somewhat straight motion.
4. Table Roll – Roll the ball from the tip of your fingers to your palm.
5. Finger Flexion – Hold the ball in your palm and press your fingers into the ball. This is different from the power grip above because you're focusing on an inward movement instead of a global gripping movement. Imagine that you're pressing your fingers straight into your palm.
6. Thumb Roll – Use your thumb to roll the ball in a circular motion on your palm.
7. Finger Squeeze – Squeeze the ball between two fingers – any two fingers you please.
8. Thumb Opposition – Roll the ball side to side on your palm using your thumb.

You can read [more details about these hand therapy ball exercises here](#).

8 Hand Therapy Putty Exercises

If you're looking for something more creative than therapy balls, then therapy putty is just the thing you need.



1. Finger Scissors – Squeeze the putty between your fingers
2. Fingertip Pinch – Pinch the putty using your thumb and fingertips
3. Power Grip – Squeeze all your fingers into the putty
4. Flat Pinch – Pinch the putty down into your thumb with straightened fingers
5. Finger Spread – Wrap the putty around two fingers and spread your fingers apart
6. Finger Extension – Wrap the putty around a hooked finger and then straighten your finger using the putty as resistance
7. Finger Spread – Wrap the putty around your hand and then spread your fingers out to stretch the putty
8. Full Grip – Squeeze down on the putty, pressing your fingers into your palm

You can find [further explanation of these therapy putty exercises here](#).

And if you're in need of some high quality putty, [check out our 4-pack](#) that comes in a variety of resistances.

9 Tabletop Hand Exercises

And now it's time to meet Barbara!



Barb is our favorite physical therapist and – lucky you – she’s the one featured in [this article with tabletop hand exercises](#). The exercises are:

1. Palm up and down
2. Wrist bend movement
3. Wrist side movement
4. Rolling movement
5. Wrist curl
6. Grip and release
7. Pen spin
8. Coin drop
9. Finger curl