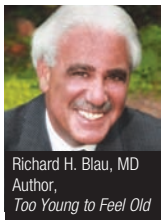


# A Helping Hand

Keep these exercises close—your hands will thank you.



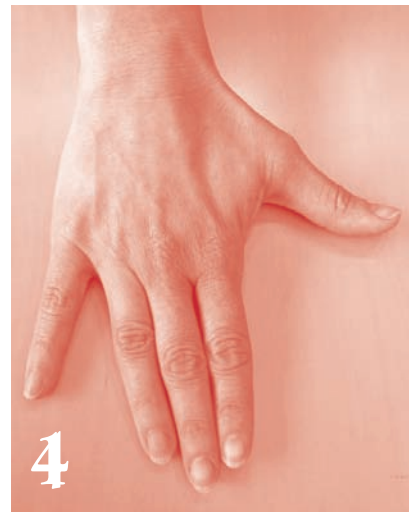
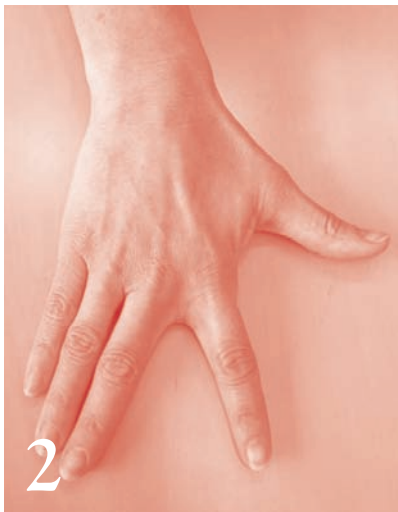
Richard H. Blau, MD  
Author,  
*Too Young to Feel Old*

When rheumatoid arthritis first strikes, it often shows up in the joints of the hands. In his book *Too Young to Feel Old*, rheumatologist Richard Blau offers these hand exercises, which may help maintain the range of motion in your fingers. (He doesn't recommend doing these during a flare-up.) Ask your doctor if they could help you, and when and how often they should be performed.

## Walk Your Fingers

Helps with grasping objects, playing musical instruments

1. Rest your hand on a flat surface, palm down (figure 1).
2. Move one finger at a time toward your thumb, starting with your index finger (figure 2).
3. Lift and move your middle finger toward your thumb (figure 3).
4. Lift and move your ring finger toward your thumb (figure 4).
5. Finally, move your little finger toward the thumb.
6. Don't move your wrist or your thumb during this exercise. Repeat 3 times.
7. Repeat steps 1-6 with the other hand.



### Middle Knuckle (PIP Joint) Finger Flexion

Helps with grasping objects, writing and maintaining your grip on eating utensils

1. Place back of hand on a table with the palm side up (figure 1).
2. Immobilize the lower knuckle (the MCP joint) with the forefinger of the opposite hand (figure 1).
3. Bend the finger from the middle joint to 90 degrees (figure 2).
4. Repeat steps 1-3 ten times for each finger of both the right and left hand.



### Top Knuckle (DIP Joint) Finger Flexion

Helps with grasping objects, writing and maintaining your grip on eating utensils

1. Place back of hand on a table with the palm side up (figure 1).
2. Immobilize the middle knuckle (the PIP joint) with both the forefinger and middle finger of the opposite hand (figure 1).
3. Bend the finger from the end joint to 90 degrees (figure 2).
4. Repeat steps 1-3 ten times for each finger of both the right and left hand.