

## Knees

- Sitting upright on a firm chair or stool, hold in your abdominals and straighten your right leg out in front of you with your toes pointing upwards, so your foot lifts off the ground. Feel the muscles in the front of your thigh (quadriceps) tightening. Hold for 10 seconds and repeat X 5–10 with each leg.

(see picture 9)



Picture 9. Strengthening knees

## Ankles and feet

- Wiggle your toes and try to spread them. Point and flex your feet X 5-10
- Sitting with your knees together, heels apart and resting on the floor, sweep your feet outwards and lift your little toes towards the outside of your outer ankles. Sweep your feet inwards and lift your big toes up towards your inner ankles. Repeat X 5–10. (see picture 10)



Picture 10. Ankle mobiliser

# Exercise for people with rheumatoid arthritis

## Take Action

Rheumatoid arthritis (RA) is a condition that makes the joints in your body become inflamed. RA mainly affects women and is more likely to develop between the ages of 30 and 50, although children, young adults and older people can also develop it. In RA, your immune system attacks your joints and sometimes other parts of your body. An attack can last a long time or come and go. When inflammation suddenly becomes more active and pain, swelling and stiffness get worse, this is known as a flare-up. RA can affect any joint, but hands and feet are usually involved. Knees and shoulders can also be affected and, less commonly, elbows, hips, and the neck.

## Keep active

People with RA are often concerned that exercise will cause further damage to their joints, but strengthening muscles helps to protect your joints and keep you mobile. Appropriate exercise can also help ease pain and with weight loss.

- Swimming and exercises in a heated pool are good for people with RA
- Balance exercise with rest – pace yourself
- Rest your joints when they are inflamed or particularly painful, but remember, too much rest can make them stiff
- Keep active, muscles in poor condition will tire sooner than strong ones
- Begin gently and build up slowly – do a little every day, rather than a lot every now and again
- Exercise when you are least in pain, stiff or tired, and when your medication is most effective
- Do range of motion exercises at least once a day. Exercising first thing will help ease morning stiffness and exercising last thing at night will help stop stiffness developing
- If you have a flare up only do range of movement exercises
- **Avoid** high impact activities like squash or contact sports.



This information has been produced by PARE Manifesto as part of World Arthritis Day 2006, which promotes better quality of life for people with arthritis.

For more information about the PARE Manifesto, visit [www.paremanifesto.org](http://www.paremanifesto.org)

For further information about World Arthritis Day, visit [www.worldarthritisday.org](http://www.worldarthritisday.org)

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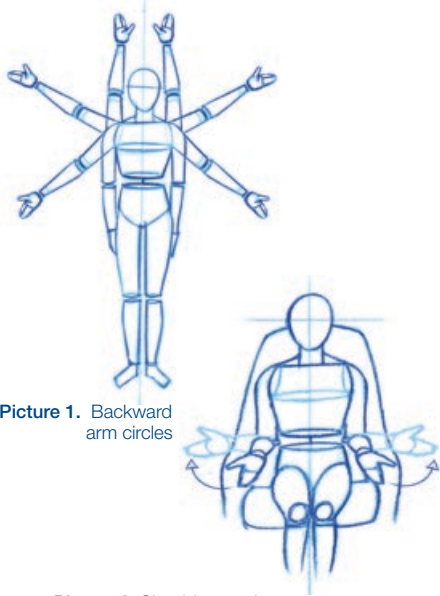


**Disclaimer** Whilst every care has been taken in preparing these materials the authors and producers of this booklet/fact sheet do not accept responsibility for any injury caused as a result of undertaking any of these exercises or activities. It is recommended that medical advice is taken if there is any doubt about the suitability of these exercises for an individual.

As we are all different, exercises that would help one person might not be suitable for another. Always check with your doctor, specialist or physiotherapist before commencing an exercise programme.

## Shoulders

- Circle your shoulders smoothly backwards X 5–10
- Start with your arms relaxed by your sides. Keeping your shoulders down, slowly raise your arms up in front of you until you are reaching upwards. Slowly lower them to the side and behind you. Repeat X 5–10 (see picture 1)



Picture 1. Backward arm circles

Picture 2. Shoulder rotation

- Bend your arms at a right angle with lower arms parallel in front of you, palms upwards. Tuck your elbows into your waist and slowly move your lower arms backwards as far as they will go. Hold for 5 – 6 seconds and take them to the starting position. Repeat X 5–10 (see picture 2)



Picture 3. Shoulder mobiliser

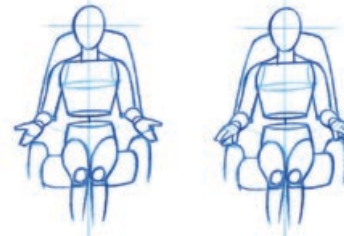
- Roll up a small towel and hold it as if you were drying your back. Gently pull the towel up and hold for 5-6 seconds, then down and hold for 5–6. Repeat X 5–10 and swap hands to work the other side (see picture 3)
- Finish the exercises with your shoulders relaxed down and back.

## Hands, wrists and elbows

- Curl your fingers into a fist and then stretch them out again, spreading your fingers wide. Repeat X 5-10
- Circle your thumbs backwards and forwards X 5-10 each way
- Stretch your thumb away from the palm of your hand and then bring your thumb in to touch the tip of each of your fingers in turn. Repeat X 2–5 with each hand (see picture 4)



Picture 4. Finger exercise



Picture 5. Elbow rotations

- Rotate your forearms so the palms face upwards, then downwards. Repeat X 5 (see picture 5)
- Flex your wrists so your hands come up, then bend them down X 5-10. (see fig 15)

## Lower back

- Hip hitches work your waist and are good for mobilising your lower back. Lie flat on your back. Keep your spine lengthened, lightly contract your abdominal muscles, keeping the natural curve in your lower back. Push your right leg down and away from you whilst pulling your left hip up towards you, then slowly push your left leg away from you, pulling up on your right hip. Keep the movement slow and smooth and repeat X 5-10 on each side. (see picture 6)



Picture 6. Hip Hitches

## Hips

- Lie on your right side, slowly raise the top leg about 60cms, but do not let your hip roll back. Slowly lower your leg and repeat X 10. Turn over and repeat with the left leg (see picture 7)



Picture 7. Hip strengthener

- Sitting upright on a firm chair, straighten your right leg out in front of you and lift it a little way off the floor. Slowly rotate the thigh outwards from the hip, then rotate the thigh inwards from the hip. This is a small movement and you should not feel any stress in your knee. Repeat X 5–10 with each leg. (see picture 8)



Picture 8. Hip rotation