

Swan Neck Deformity in Inflammatory Arthritis

What Is a Swan Neck Deformity?

- This is when the middle joint over-straightsens and the end joint bends.
- It happens due to inflammation (pain and swelling) in the finger joints.



- The structures that support the joint become weak and stretched.
- Tendons that move the finger joints slip out of place.
- If not treated the finger can get permanently stuck in this position (making it hard to grip objects).

Treatment

Splints

- Make it easier to bend your finger and grip objects
- Hold the middle joint in a slightly bent position
- Reduce joint pain



How to Wear Your Splint:

- On the first day, wear your splint for up to 30 minutes. If the splint causes pain or your skin becomes red, stop wearing the splint. Contact your arthritis therapist
- Gradually increase your wearing time each day.
- Splints are easy to lose. Be careful when removing gloves, washing hands, making beds, etc.

My splint wearing guideline:

Joint Protection

Protect your finger joints from stress when doing everyday activities:

- Avoid holding knuckles in a bent position while your other finger joints are straight. For example: holding a book. Try to use a “flat hand” instead.
- Use tools and utensils with padded, large handles.



Exercises

Use **ice or contrast bath** to reduce pain and swelling. Use **heat or contrast bath** to improve movement before starting your exercises.

Straighten fingertip: Using your other hand, hold the middle finger joint straight. Bend the fingertip slightly and then straighten it as much as you can. If you cannot fully straighten it, push up the fingertip with your other hand.

Repeat 5 to 10 times, once or twice each day.



Fist: Slowly curl the tips of your fingers into your palm to make a **gentle** fist/gentle stretch. Slowly open your hand and straighten your fingers.

Repeat 5 to 10 times, once or twice each day.



Tuck: With your big knuckles straight, gently curl the tips of your fingers down to touch the base of your fingers.

Hold 10 to 30 seconds. Then gently straighten your fingers and repeat 5 times, once or twice each day.



Muscle stretch: Stretch one finger at a time. Hold the big knuckle joint at the base of the finger very straight. Use your free hand to push down and bend the middle joint as far as possible.

Hold for 10 to 30 seconds. Repeat 3 times, once or twice each day. Stop if the middle joint is swollen or painful.



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