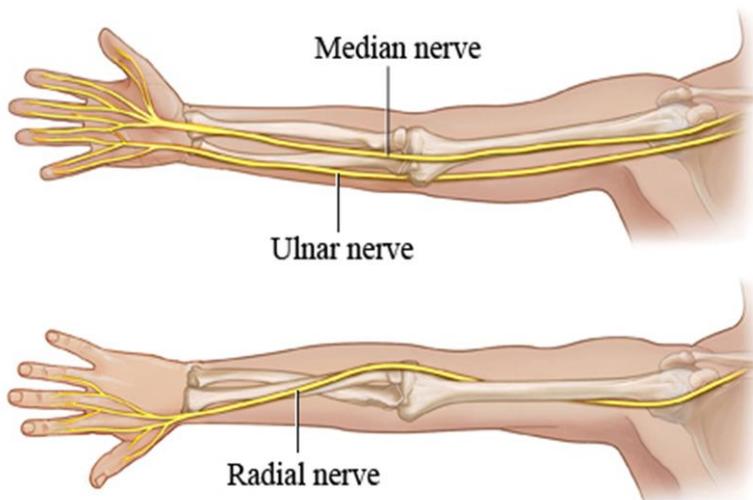


Upper Extremity Nerve Glide



The three main nerves that supply muscle power and sensation to the forearm and hand are the median, ulnar, and radial nerves. These nerves have some elasticity and stretch as well as slide (glide) as we move our arms, elbows, wrists, and fingers. With repetitive or acute trauma, adhesions and scarring can bind the nerve, which in turn limits the nerve's normal gliding movement. This tethering can then over-stretch the nerves causing pain, numbness, tingling, burning, or coldness in the forearm, hand, or fingers.

The following exercises are designed to slide, or “pump” the nerves, in an attempt to restore the normal gliding of a healthy nerve. Think of the nerve as “gliding” and not “stretching” – it is very important to not over-stretch the nerve, as these can actually worsen or add to further injury to the nerve. Perform the exercises slowly and in a controlled manner. Feeling some tension from surrounding muscles is expected, but do not stretch to the point of pain or numbness. Hold the glided position for about 10 seconds to start with; you can increase the amount of time as you improve – the goal being about 30 seconds. Also, gently “pumping” the nerve helps to further release adhesions.

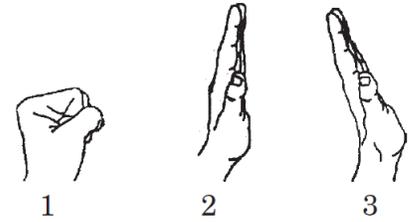
*If you have any problems or questions,
please call your doctor's office (8am-5pm).*

Answering service for after hours.

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Median Nerve Glide Positions

- Start in a sitting position, with your head straight, arms at your side, and elbow bent to 90 degrees.
- Slowly and gently move to position 1 (see below), holding the position for about 10 seconds, then slowly moving to the next position.
- Continue spending about 10 seconds in each position before gently moving to the next position, until you have done all 6 positions – which we will call one cycle.
- Repeat for 5 cycles. Do this 3-4 times a day.



Position 1: wrist in neutral, fingers and thumb in flexion

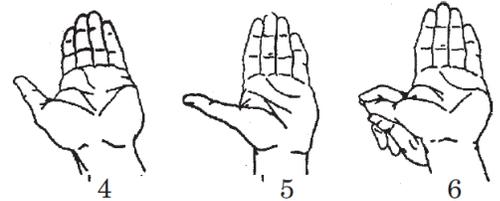
Position 2: wrist in neutral, fingers and thumb extended

Position 3: wrist and fingers extended, thumb neutral (relaxed)

Position 4: wrist, thumb, and fingers all extended

Position 5: same as Position 4, but with the forearm and wrist in supination (rotated palm up)

Position 6: same as Position 5, with other hand gently stretching the thumb



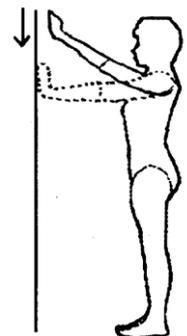
Median Nerve Glide Prayer Stretch

- Start in a sitting position, with your head straight, and palms together in the “prayer position” in front of your face. Make sure that the entire palm of each hand is in contact with the other hand.
- Slowly and gently pull your hands downward, keeping the palms in complete contact with one another, until you feel some tension or muscle stretch. Stop and back up if you feel pain or numbness.
- Hold this “prayer position” for about 10 seconds, and then slowly raise your hands back to your face.
- Repeat for 5 cycles. Do this 3-4 times a day.



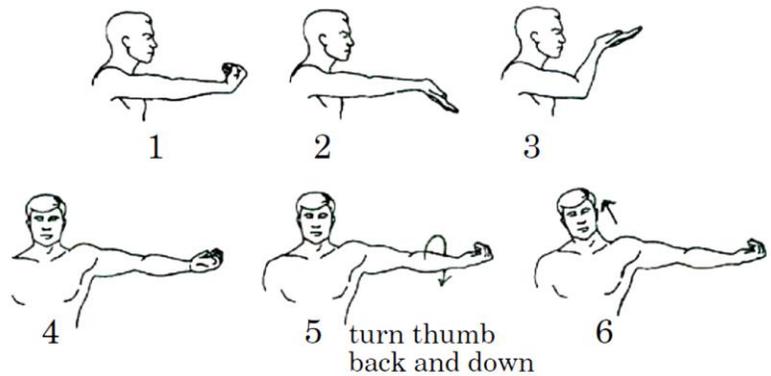
Progression Median Nerve Glide Stretch (Alternative to the Median Nerve Prayer Stretch)

- Start in a standing position, facing a wall, with your head straight. Gently reach your hand above your shoulder level and place it on the wall in front of you. Make sure your entire palm is in contact with the wall.
- Slowly and gently slide your arm and hand down the wall, keeping your elbow straight and palm in contact with the wall until you feel some tension or muscle stretch. Stop and back up if you feel pain or numbness.
- Hold this position for about 10 seconds, and then slowly slide your hand back to the starting position.
- Repeat for 5 cycles. Do this 3-4 times a day.



Ulnar Nerve Glide Positions

- Start in a sitting position, with your head straight, arm straight out in front of you. Slowly and gently move to position 1 (see below), holding the position for about 10 seconds, then slowly moving to the next position.
- Continue spending about 10 seconds in each position before gently moving to the next position, until you have done all 6 positions – which we will call one cycle.
- Repeat for 5 cycles. Do this 3-4 times a day.



Position 1: forearm in supination (palm up), wrist and knuckles in flexion, and elbow extended

Position 2: elbow, wrist, thumb, and fingers all extended; palm of the hand up and out

Position 3: same as Position 2, but with the elbow flexed less than 80 degrees

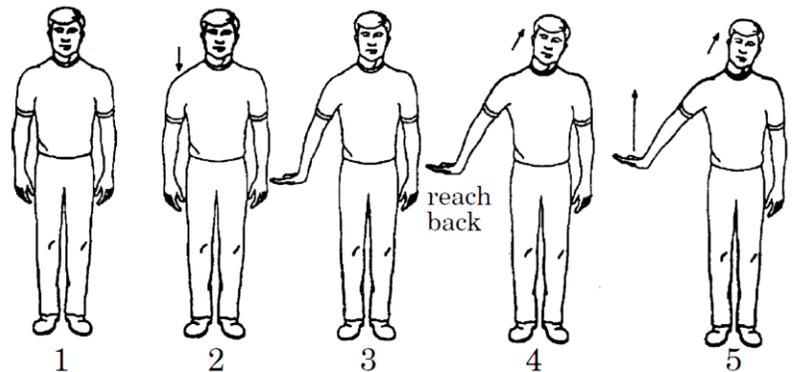
Position 4: same as Position 1, but with the arm out and to the side

Position 5: same as Position 4, but with the thumb and wrist turned back and down

Position 6: same as Position 5, but with your head and neck tilted away from the arm

Radial Nerve Glide

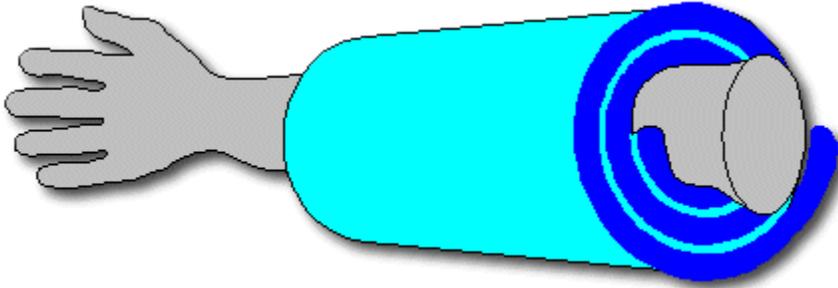
- Start in a standing position with shoulders relaxed, and your hand at your side, with the back of the hand facing forward (Position 1).
- Drop or push your shoulder down towards the floor – this movement comes from the shoulder with the back straight; do not lean (Position 2).
- Bend your wrist towards the palm, so that your palm is facing up and behind you in the “waiter’s tip” position, as if you were being handed an object from behind you (Position 3).
- Move your arm back, reaching behind you and out at a slight angle to the side until you feel muscle tension in the forearm – if needed, tilt your head and neck away from your arm to feel the tension (Position 4).
- If you still do not feel the tension, bend your wrist, hand, and fingers further towards the ceiling, or tilt your head and neck further away from your arm (Position 5).
- Hold the position needed to feel tension for about 10 seconds, and then slowly return to the starting position.
- Repeat for 5 cycles. Do this 3-4 times a day.



Elbow Splint

A splint or brace used while sleeping to keep the elbow from bending while you sleep may help.

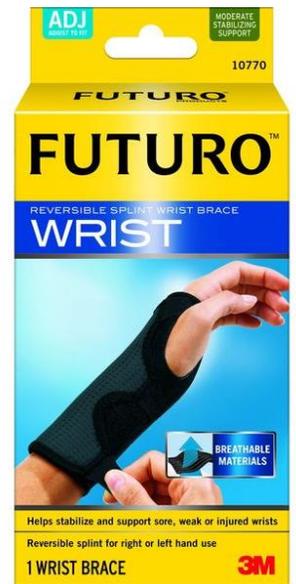
Wrap a towel around the elbow, like a "pig in a blanket", and hold in place with tape or safety pins.



Watch and modify your posture during the day to avoid long periods of time with your elbow bent. If you work at a desk, make more space between your work and your chest, so that your elbows are straighter more often.

Cock-Up Wrist Splint

A cock-up wrist splint or brace – similar to the one pictured - while sleeping to keep the wrist from bending (flexing) while you sleep may help.



Author: Garry W.K. Ho, M.D., CAQSM, June 2011