



SUOMEN MUISTI-
ASIAANTUNTIJAT



EXERCISES TO ACTIVATE THE BRAIN

ETNIMU
PROJECT

IMPROVING BRAIN HEALTH
OF ETHNIC MINORITY ELDERLY



EXERCISES TO ACTIVATE THE BRAIN

This guidebook is developed as a part of the Society for Memory Disorders Expertise in Finland (Suomen muistiasiantuntijat ry) ETNIMU-project, which improves the brain health of ethnic minority elderly and is funded by RAY. The guidebook belongs to the ETNIMU-project series of publications, which are also published in Finnish, Estonian, Somali and Russian languages. The guide in English was published by ETNIMU-activity (ETNIMU-toiminta). More information: www.muistiasiantuntijat.fi/etnimu

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Happy exercises to activate the brain

This booklet is addressed to group leaders improving the mental well-being of elderly immigrants in Finland. The booklet contains 22 coordination and concentration exercises that support brain health by improving interaction between the brain and muscles. Because the brain needs activation.

Even a small amount of physical activity and exercising may be critical for the quality of life. Aging impairs the ability to control muscles and movements. With regular exercise, we can slow these changes.

Exercise also improves mental well-being and supports memory. It is good to challenge yourself and to do something you have never tried before. New skills open new connections in the brain. The training of concentration skills promotes the functioning of memory in everyday chores.

An active lifestyle and social relationships are critical for maintaining brain health. Do these exercises in a group or alone at home. By exercising together, you get support from the others, and you may unexpectedly find yourself bursting out laughing, which is the best medicine ever. Learning a new movement is easier when exercising is fun, and when you repeat the movement for several times.

The exercises are designed to go from easy to more difficult ones. The difficulty levels may also be increased by using different directions for the movements or including other body parts in the exercise, for example, by combining leg movements with arm movements. Exercises may be done either while sitting down or standing up. Create together with your group new moves and exercises.

With happy exercising wishes

Siiri Jaakson, Eva Rönkkö and Urve Jaakkola

Memory does not go to waste in use, quite the opposite!

Tips for the group to support exercise:

- Make one part of the movement at a time.
- Increase the difficulty level step by step.
- Focus!
- It doesn't matter if you don't succeed right away. When you exercise, you are allowed to have a good laugh at yourself!
- Success requires repetition, that is - practice makes perfect.
- Customize the exercises to meet your own needs and understanding.

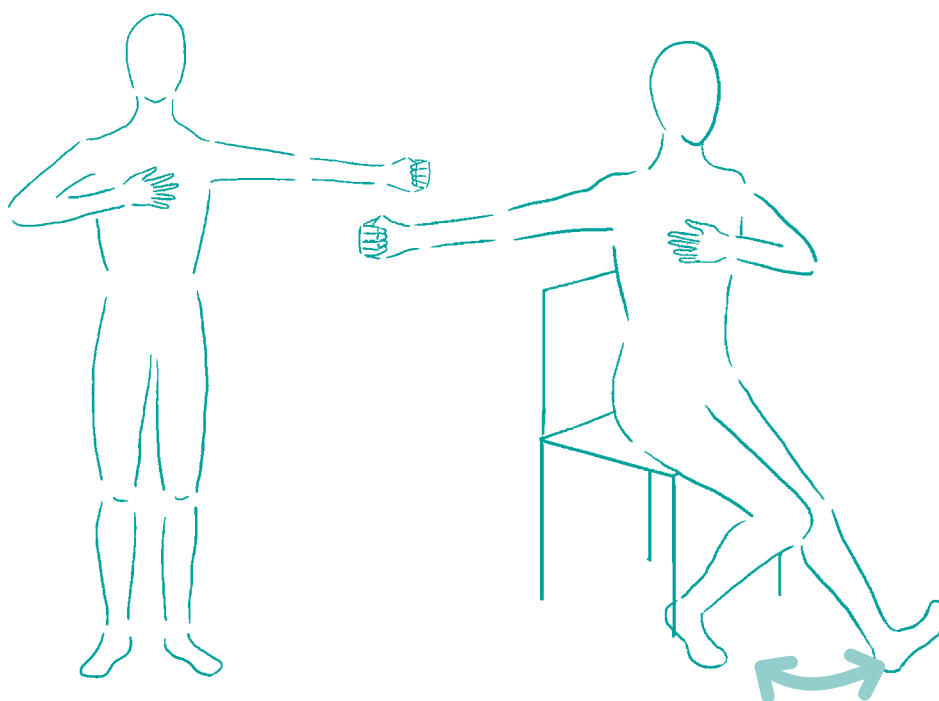
For group leaders:

- Learn the movements yourself and practice before going to the group.
- Ask the exercises to be done only by one exercise/ instruction at the same time.
- Consider the skill level and resources of the group. Movements may be done both while sitting and while standing.
- Encourage group members to participate. There is no need for everyone to succeed at all times, but exercising pays definitely off.
- Exercising does not have to be deadly serious; laughter is good for everyone!
- Be sensitive to the cultural needs of group members. Make use of everyone's strengths.

You may print out the exercise list for the participants on the website www.muistiasiantuntijat.fi/etnimu



Swapping of lifted arms



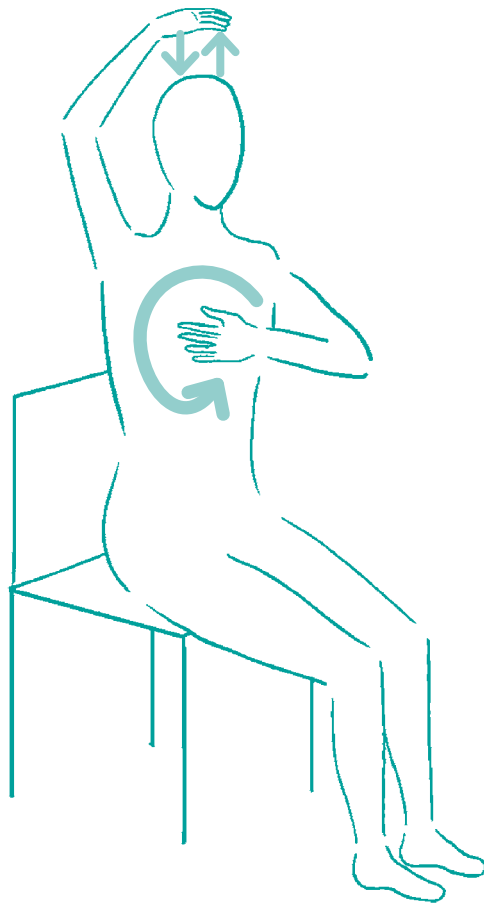
You may do this exercise either while standing or sitting.

- Raise our right arm to your side, fingers clenched into a fist and left arm on your chest with fingers open. Swap the hands. Keep fingers of the hand raised to your side always in fists.

Complicate the exercise:

- Tap the heels alternately in front of you.
- Turn your fisted hand's thumb downwards, then do the same with the other hand.

Simultaneous circular hand movements and patting

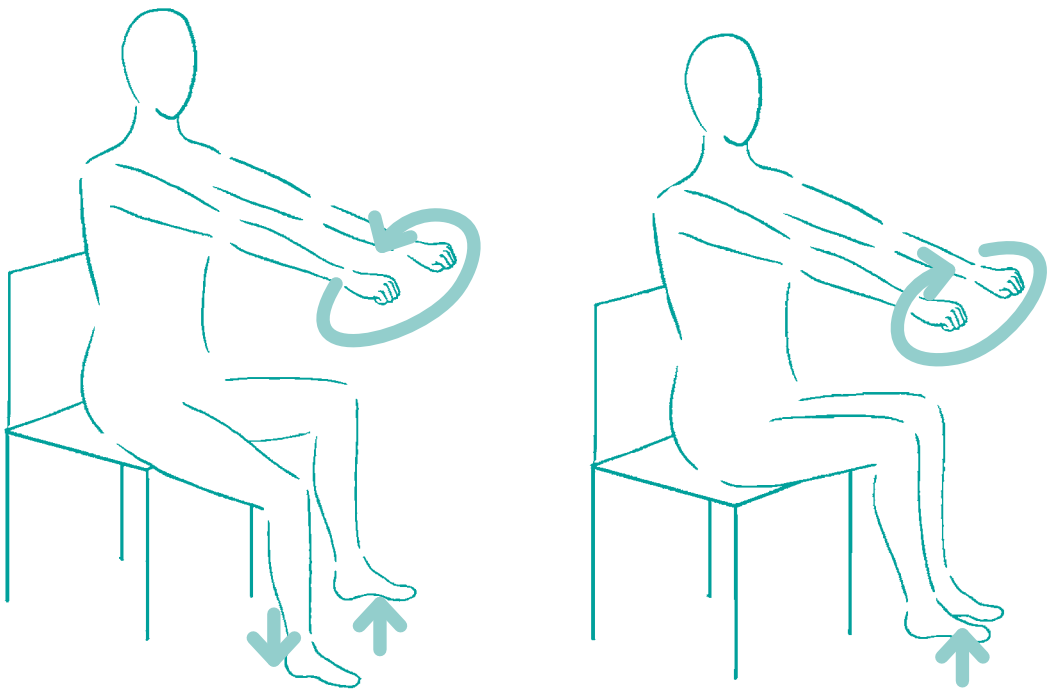


- Pat your head with your right hand.
- Bring in your left hand and draw a circular movement at your chest.
- Swap the hand and pat with the left hand and draw a circle with the right one.

Complicate the exercise:

- Raise your knees at the same time.

Circling fisted hands and lifting feet



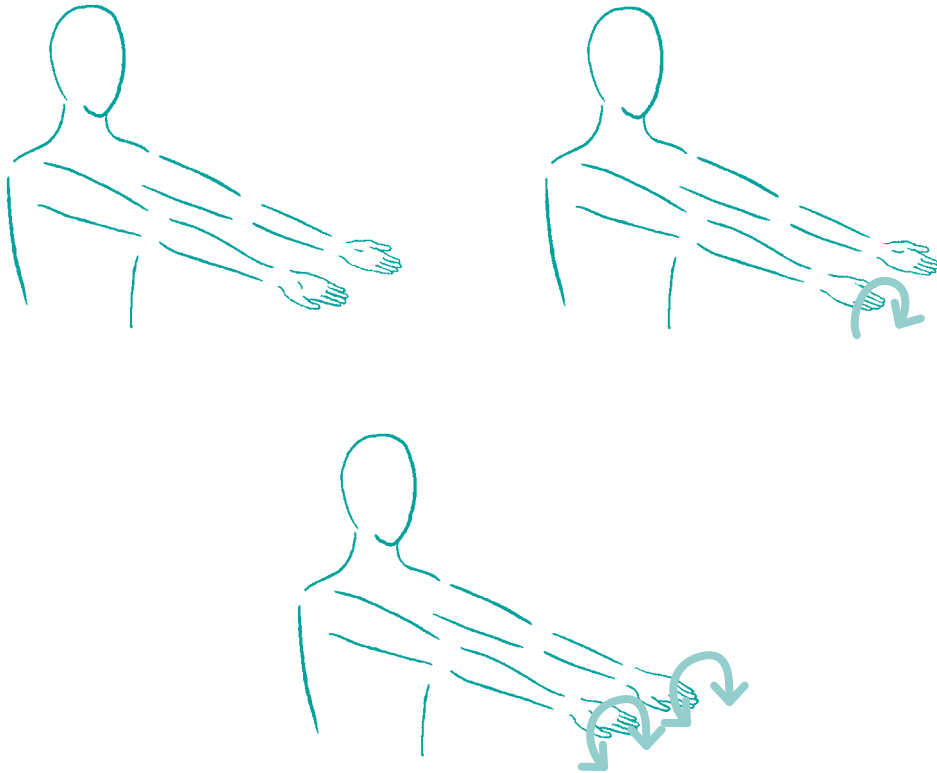
Do the exercise while sitting.

- Clench your hands into fists and lift your arms straightly forward. Circle both hands together clockwise. At the same time march your feet.

Complicate the exercise:

- Lift your knees simultaneously and circle fisted hands counterclockwise.

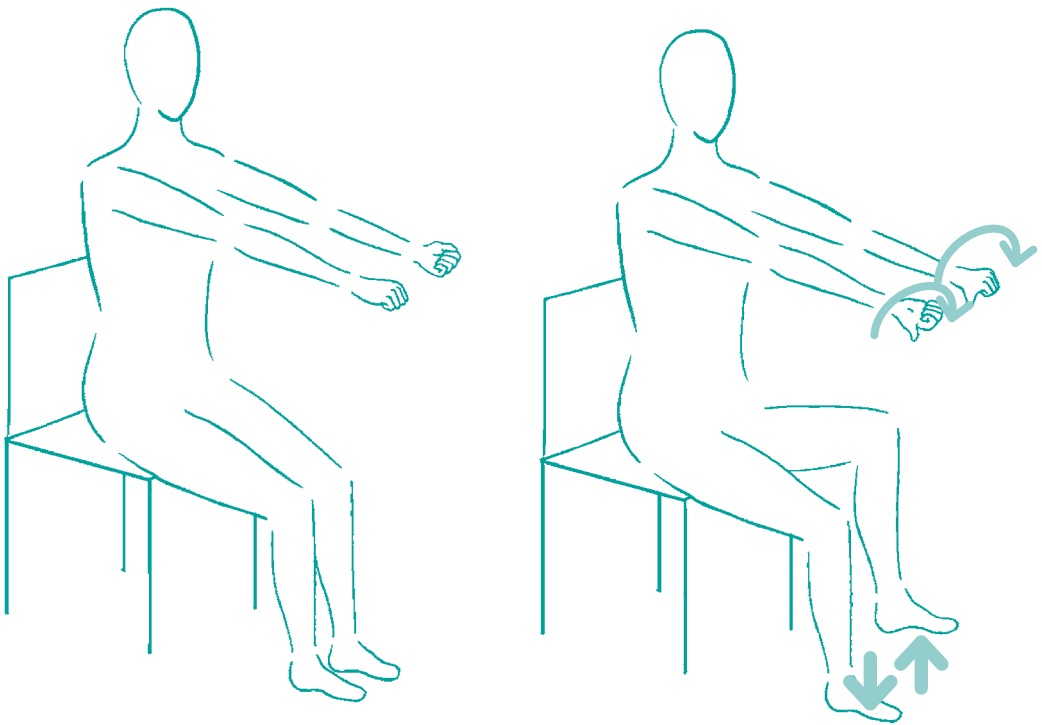
Turning palms



Stretch your arms straight forward with your palms turned upwards.

- When I say **right**, turn your right palm downwards.
- When I say **left**, turn your left palm downwards.
- When I say **both**, turn both palms to the opposite position from the position they are at that moment.

Turning fists

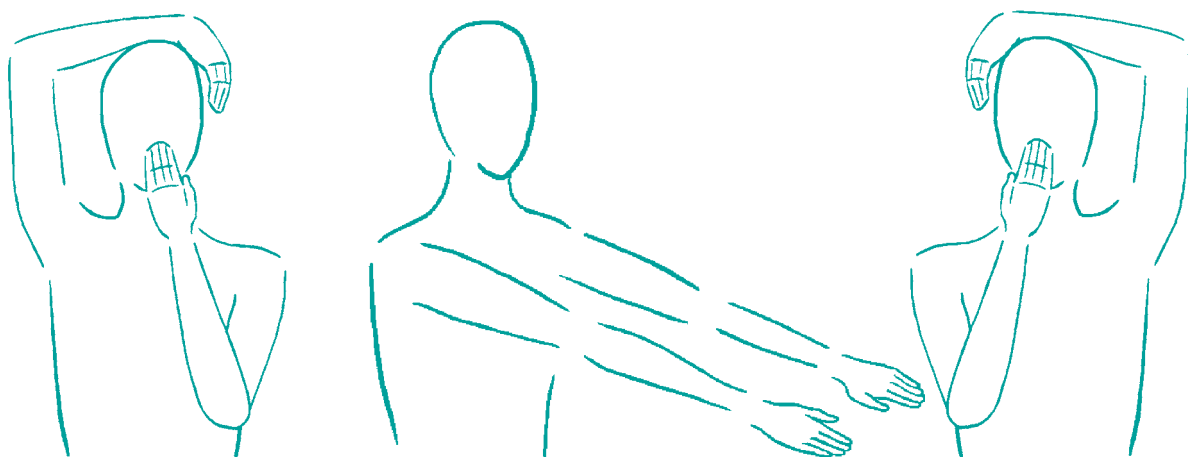


- Stretch your both fisted hands forward, with palms faced to opposite directions.
- When you turn your fists to the right, push the thumbs out.
- When you turn your fists to the left, clench the thumbs into fists.

Complicate the exercise:

- March while you turn fists.

Touching the nose and ear

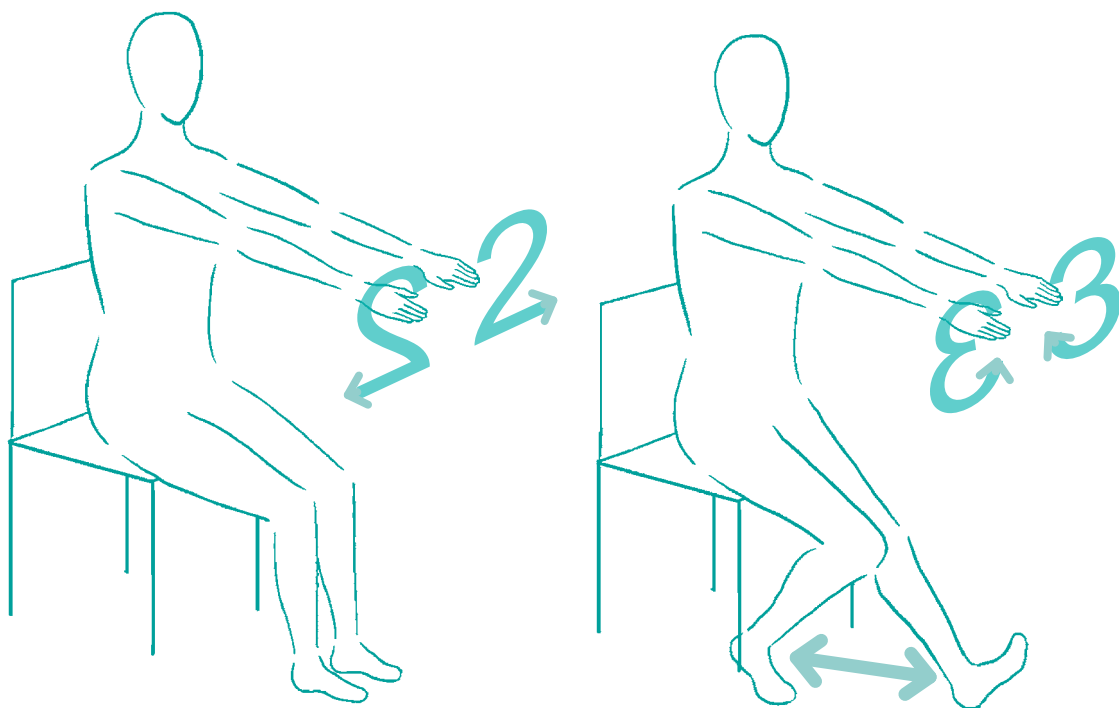


- Bring your right hand over the top of your head to your left ear and place your left hand on your nose.
- Stretch both hands straight forward.
- Bring your left hand over the top of your head to your right ear and right hand to your nose.

Complicate the exercise:

- Do the exercise while walking (forward and backward).

Numbers by hands

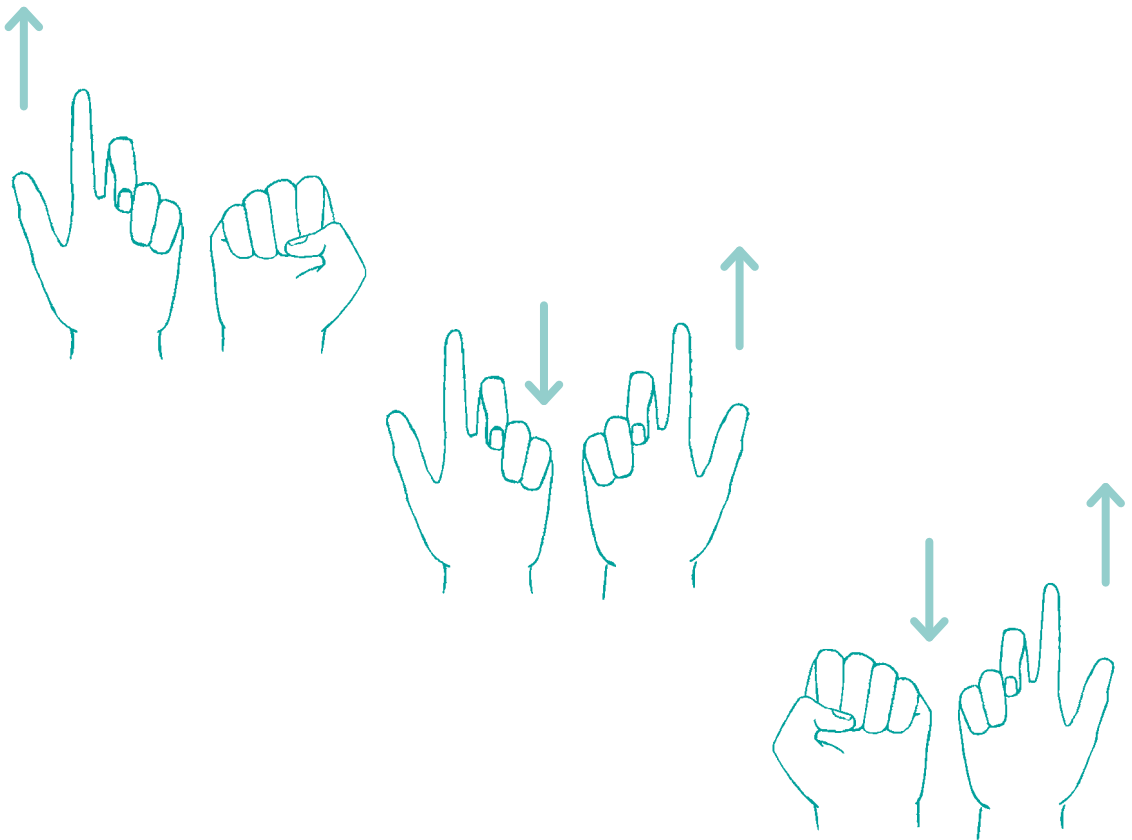


- With straight outstretched arms write in the air numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10 and back so that you draw with your right hand a number and with your left hand the mirror image of the number.

Complicate the exercise:

- Complicate the exercise by moving feet alternately forward and back.

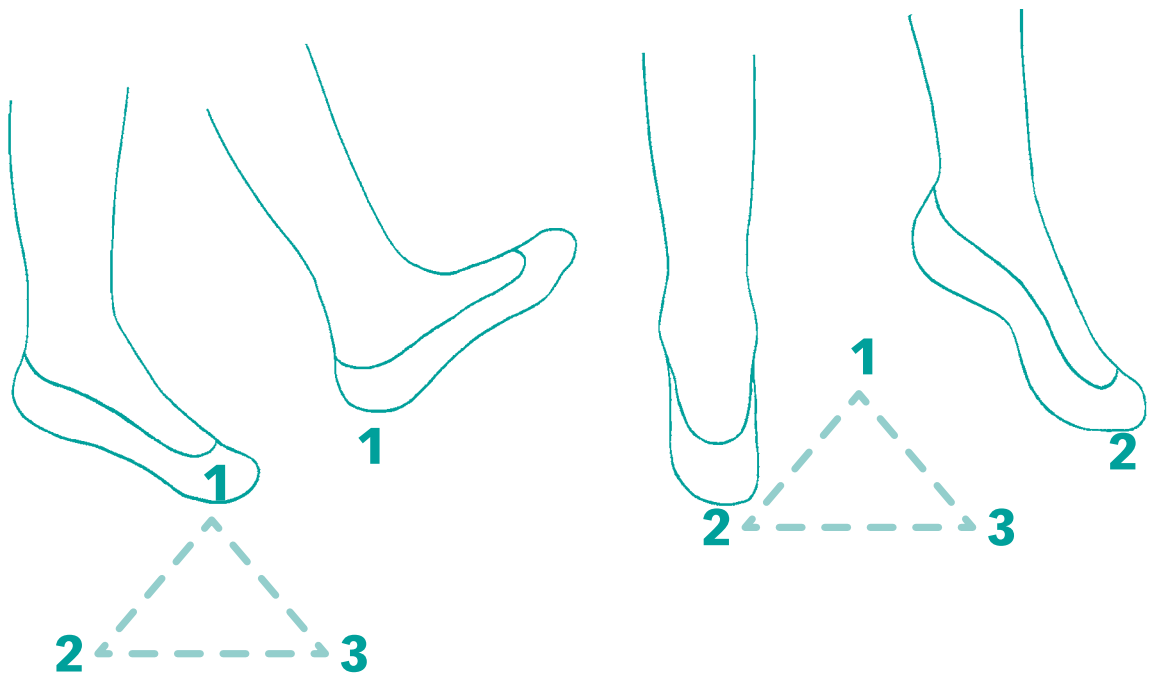
Closing and opening the fingers



Make a gentle fist of both hands, palm facing upwards.

- Open one by one the fingers of the left fist, starting from the thumb.
- Then open one by one the fingers of the right fist, starting again from the thumb. At the same time close one by one the fingers of the left fist starting from the little finger.
- Continue the simultaneous opening of the fingers from the thumb and closing from the little finger.

Different pace of feet



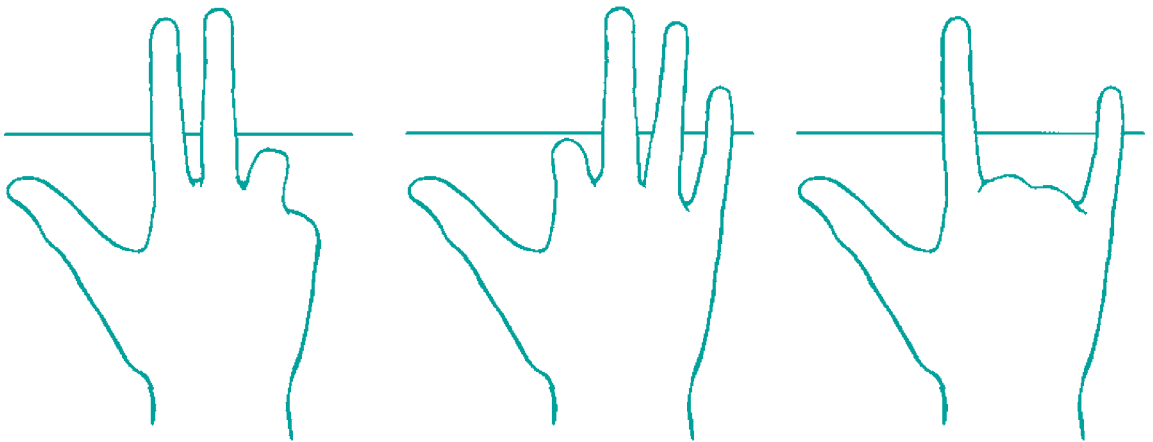
Do the exercise while sitting.

- Make with your right foot triangles on the floor (1, 2, 3).
- The left foot touches the floor alternately with the toes and heel (1, 2).

Complicate the exercise:

- Add any movement with hands.

Fingers on a table



Do the exercise at the table.

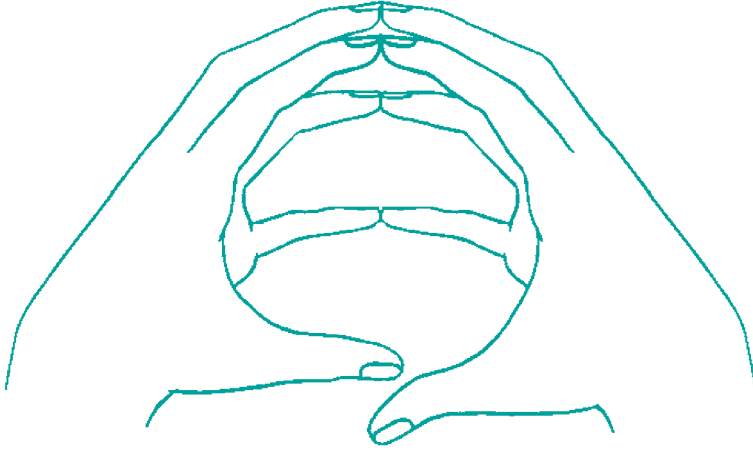
Swap your fingers at the edge of the table as quickly as possible.

- Index and middle finger
- Middle finger, ring finger and little finger
- Index finger and little finger
- Continue in the same order

Complicate the exercise:

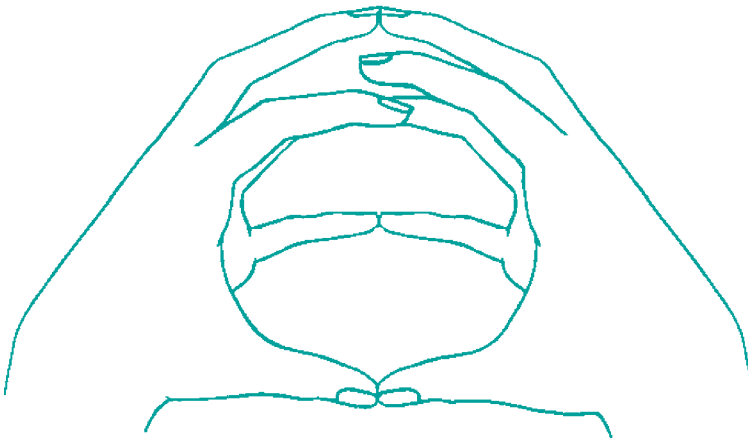
- Do the exercise with both hands.

A ball formed by hands and the rotation of fingers



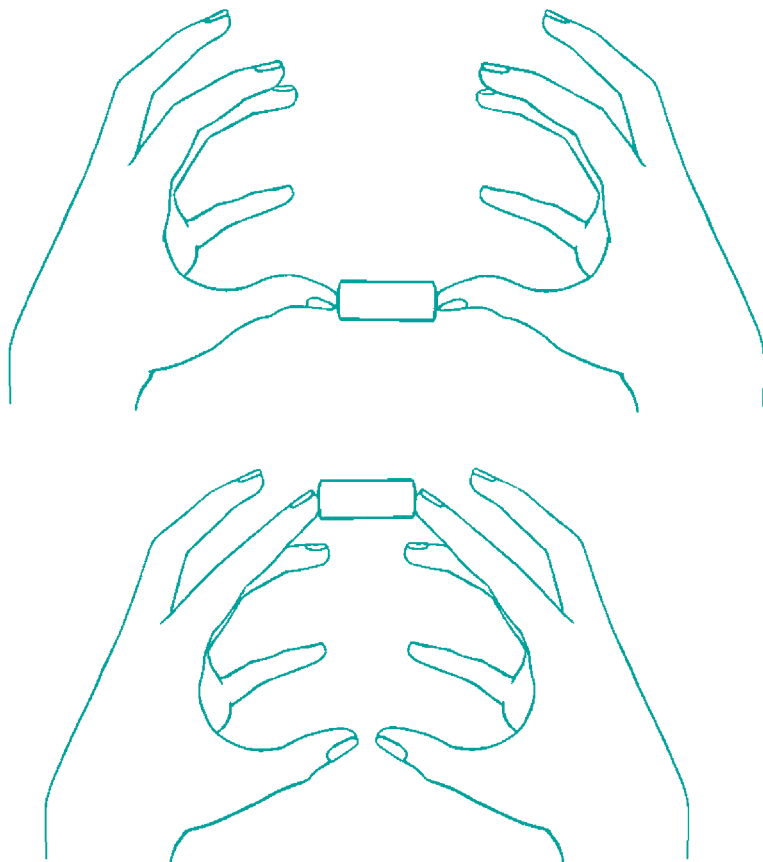
You may do this exercise either while standing or sitting.

- Make a ball with your fingers and rotate your thumbs around each other, then change the direction.



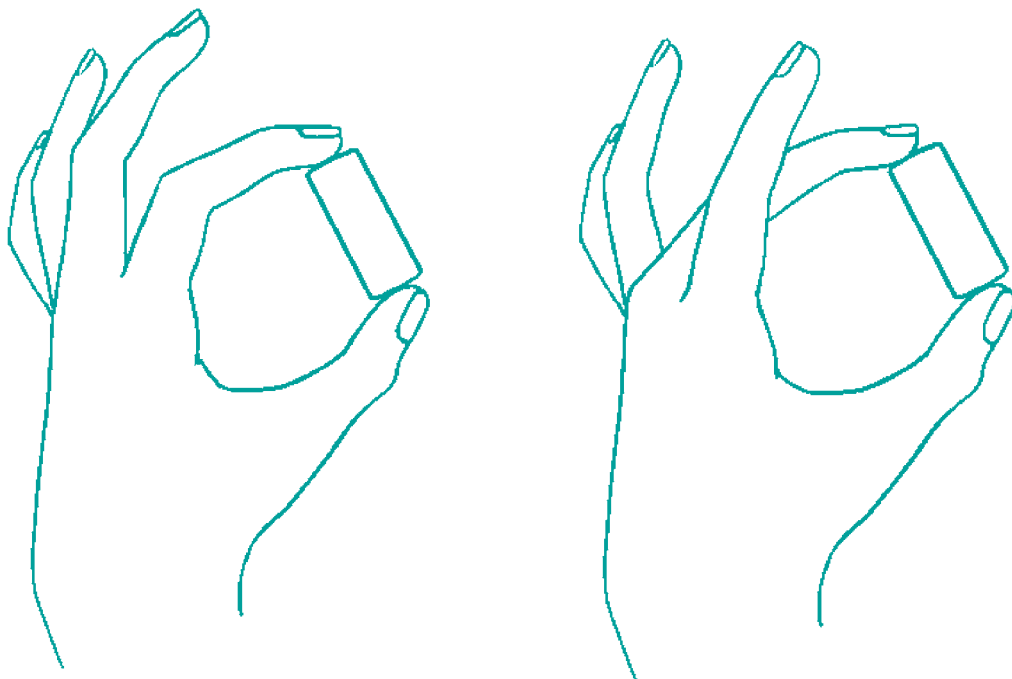
- Rotate your index fingers around each other, then change the direction.
- Rotate your middle fingers around each other, then change the direction.
- Rotate your ring fingers around each other, then change the direction.
- Rotate your little fingers around each other, then change the direction.

Moving a cork with the fingers of both hands



- Place the cork between your thumbs and keep it there.
- Move the cork between the index fingers.
- Move the cork between the middle fingers.
- Move the cork between the ring fingers.
- Move the cork between the little fingers.
- Then repeat the movements backward bringing the cork back.

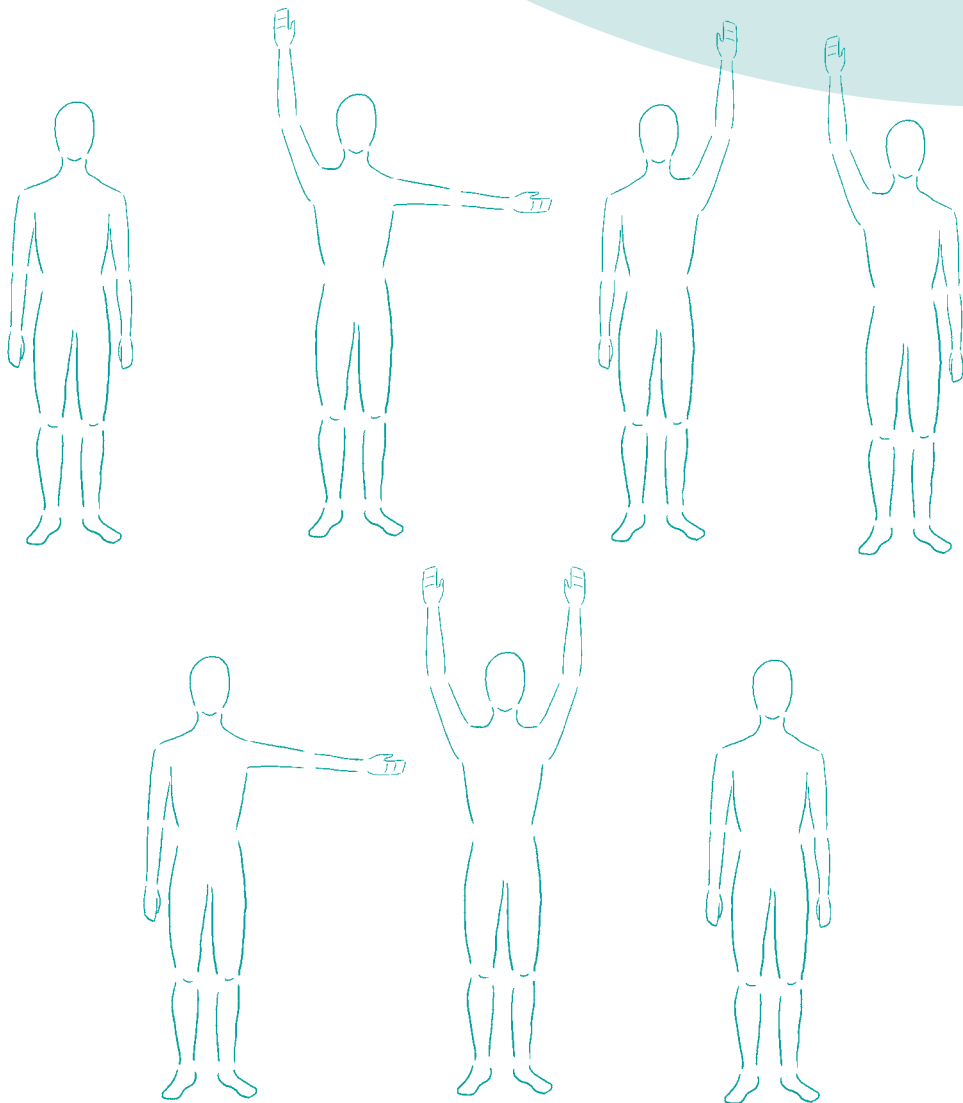
Moving a cork with the fingers of one hand



Place the cork between your thumb and index finger.

- Move the cork between the middle finger and thumb.
- Move the cork between the ring finger and thumb.
- Move the cork between the little finger and thumb.
- Then bring the cork back the same way and repeat.

Independent movement of hands



- Move your left hand up and down (1, 2).
- Move your right hand simultaneously to the side, up and down (1, 2, 3).
- Then swap the movements.

Rotation of fingers



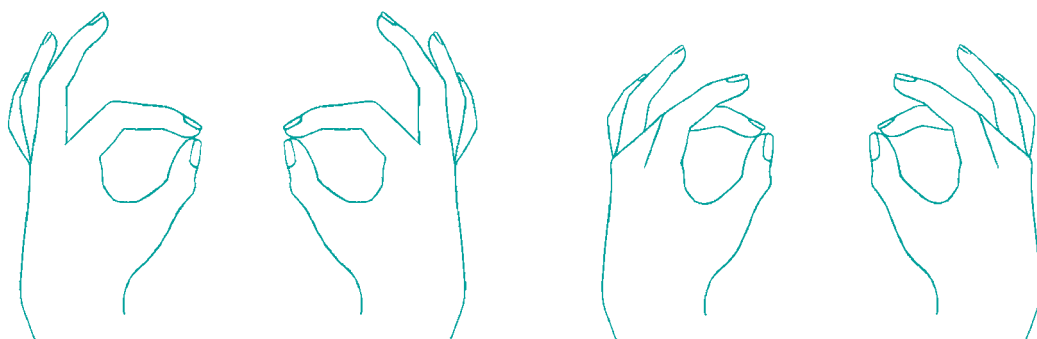
Stretch your hands in front of you.

- Rotate your little fingers.
- Rotate both your little fingers and ring fingers simultaneously.
- Bring in the middle fingers and make circles with three fingers.
- Bring in the index fingers and make circles with four fingers.
- Keep your thumbs in place throughout the exercise.

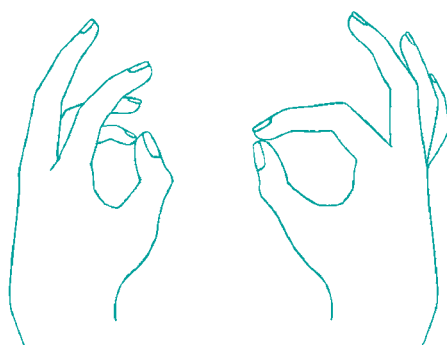
Complicate the exercise:

- Add the movement of the feet alternately back and forth.

Finger curl



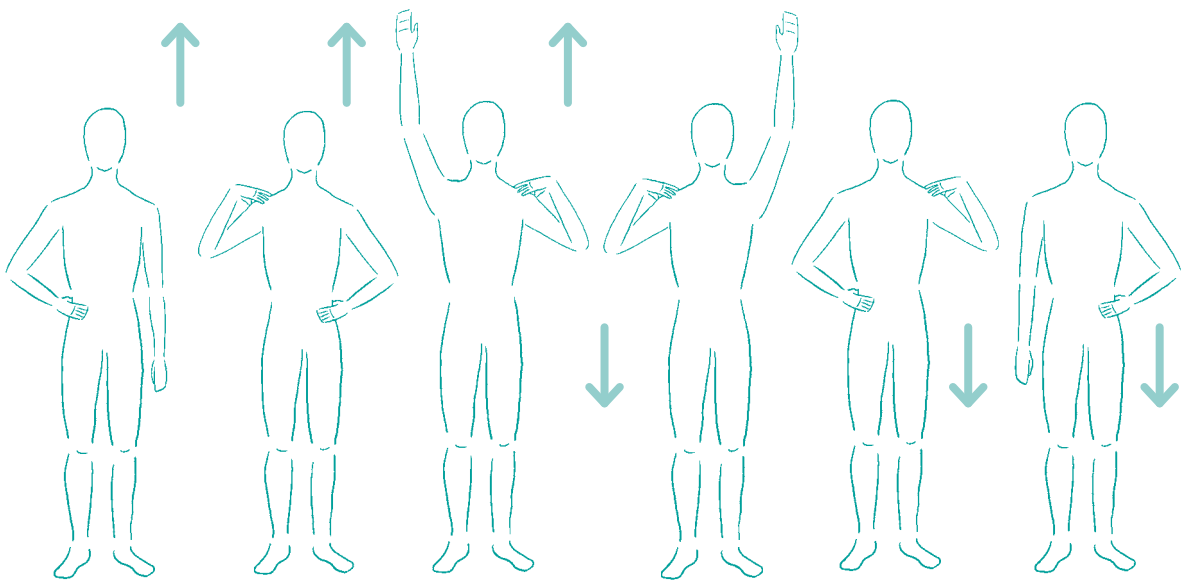
- Touch the tips of index fingers with your thumbs of the same hand.
- Touch the tips of middle fingers with your thumbs.
- Touch the tips of ring fingers with your thumbs.
- Touch the tips of little fingers with your thumbs.



Complicate the exercise:

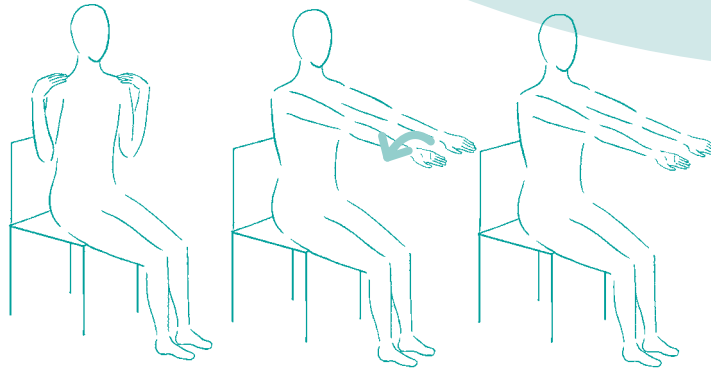
- Start the exercise from different directions by touching the tip of little finger with your left thumb and the tip of the index finger with your right thumb.
- Continue by touching the tips of all fingers.

Lifting arms alternately



- Start while standing or sitting hands extended straight down.
- Raise your left hand to your hip.
- Next, raise your left hand to your shoulder and right hand to your hip.
- Raise your left hand up and right hand to your shoulder.
- Next, bring both hands down the same way, so that your left hand is moving first and the right one follows.

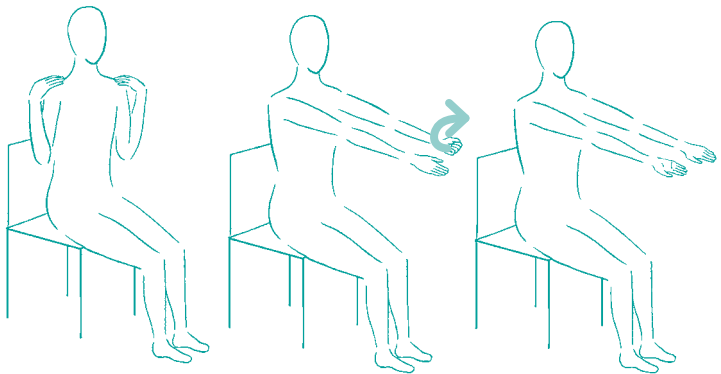
Stretching and turning hands



- Sit straight and touch your shoulders with your hands.
- Stretch your arms from the shoulders straight in front of you, one palm turned down and the other one up.
- Touch your shoulders with your hands and stretch your arms once more from the shoulders straight out, swap the turning direction of the palms.

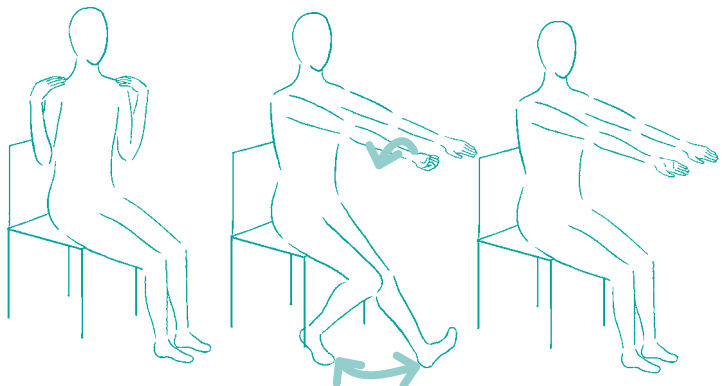
Complicate the exercise:

- Clench the hand that is turned upward into a fist.

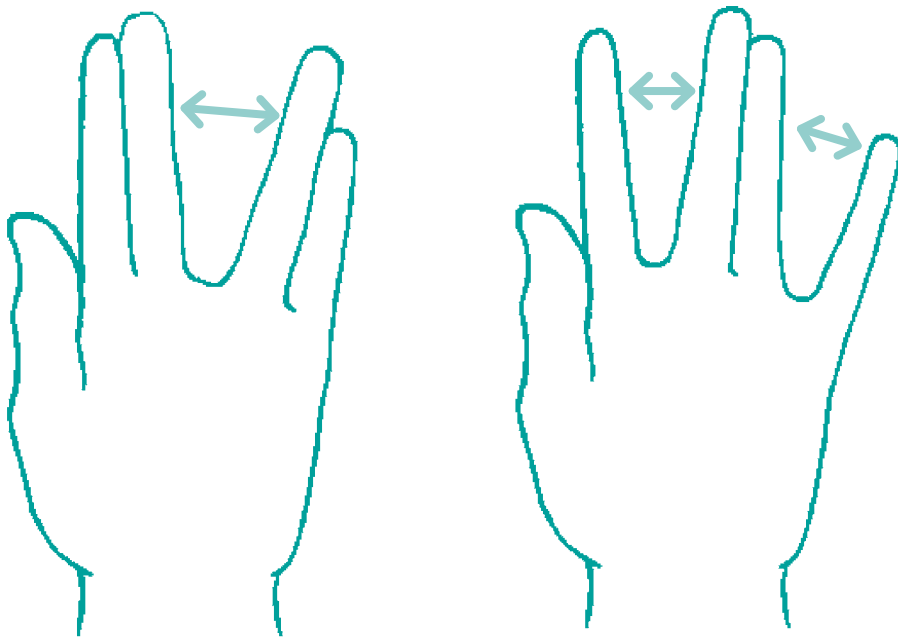


Complicate the exercise even further:

- Touch the floor in front of you alternately with your heels.

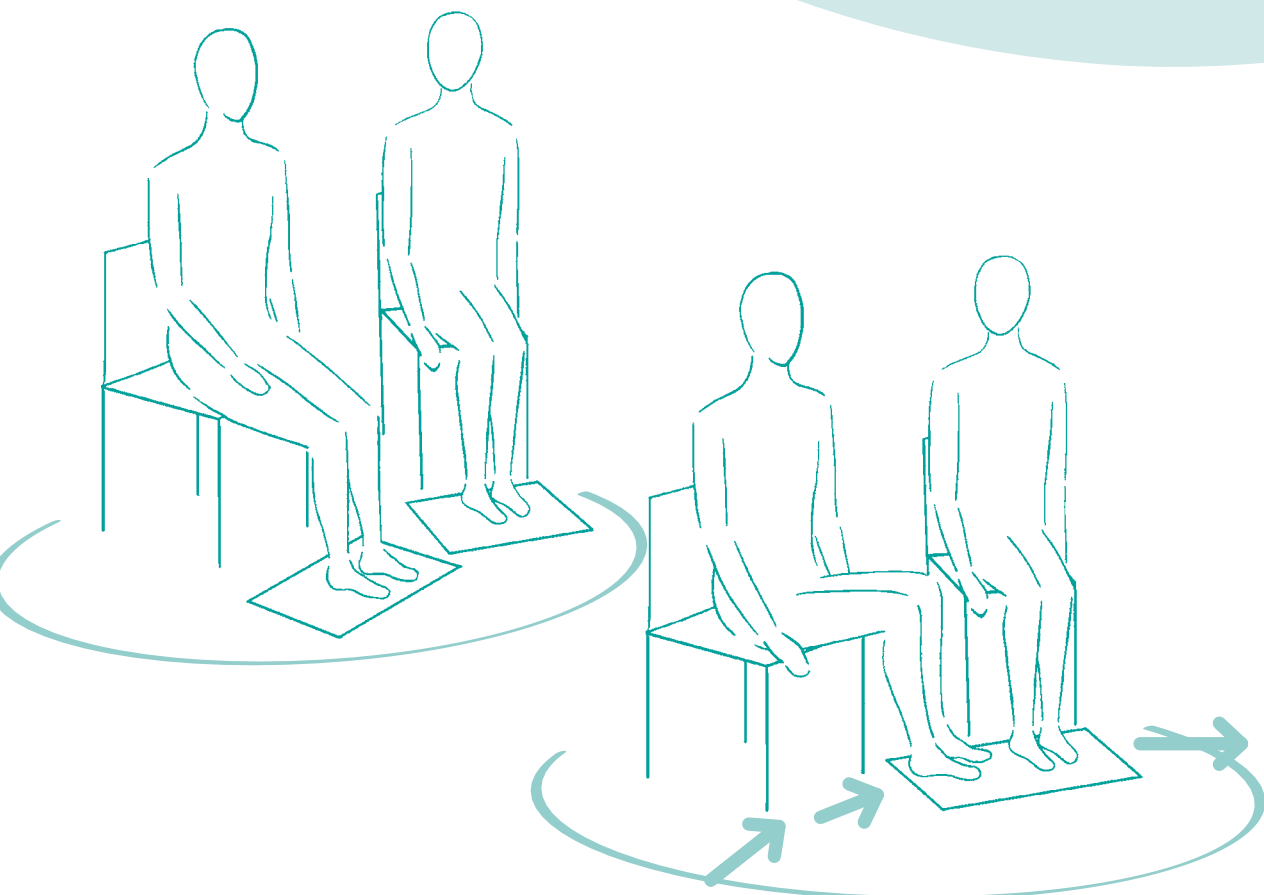


Finger spread



- Spread the middle finger from the index finger.
- Spread index finger from the middle finger and ring finger from the little finger.
- Keep your thumb in place throughout the exercise.

Passing around newspapers in a circle 1



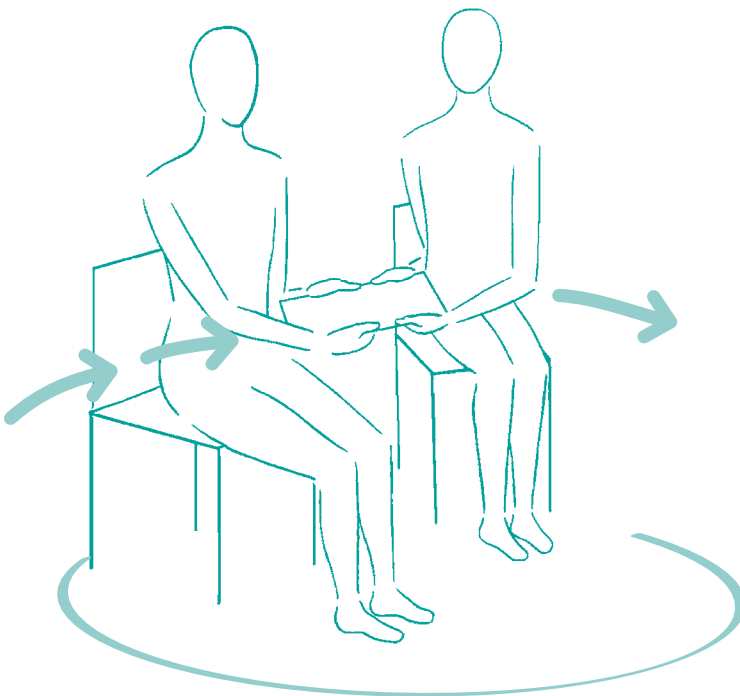
Exercise 1: Sit in a circle, everyone having a newspaper under feet.

- Pass the newspaper clockwise to the person sitting next to you. Keep your feet together.
- Take the newspaper passed on to you with your left foot and pass it on with your right foot.
- When the instructor claps, swap the direction of movement of the newspapers. From clockwise to counterclockwise and vice versa.

Complicate the exercise:

- Clap your hands in the same rhythm.

Passing around newspapers in a circle 2



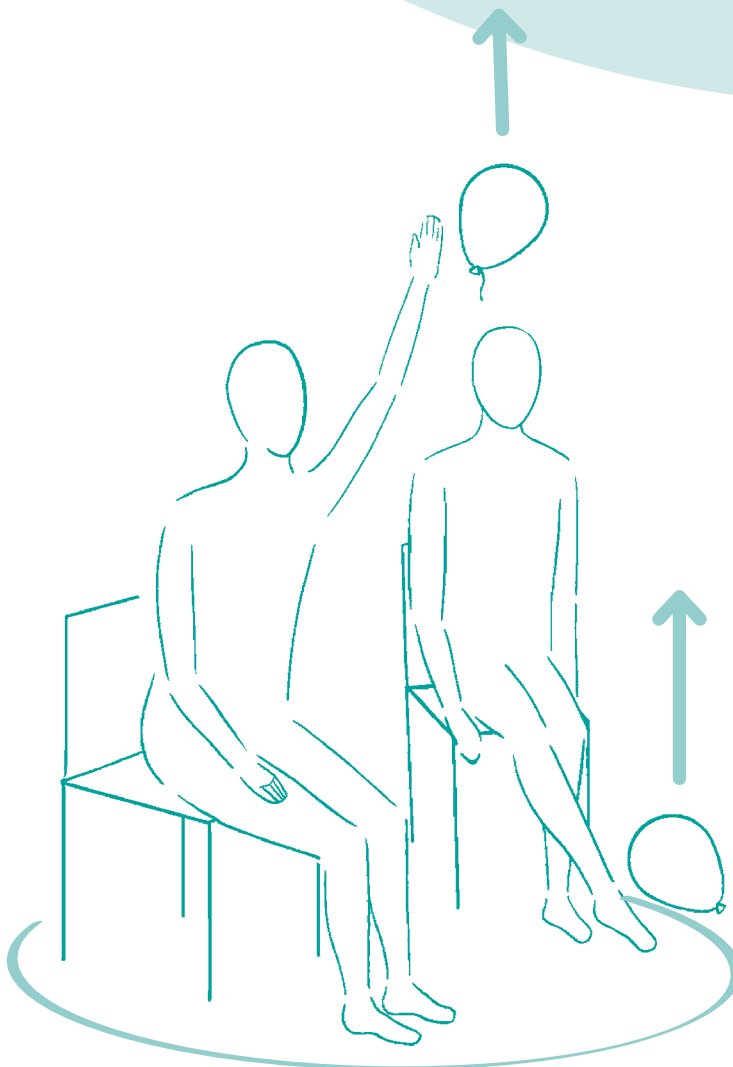
Exercise 2: Sit in a circle, everyone having a newspaper in their hand.

- Pass the newspaper clockwise on to the person sitting next to you.
- When the instructor claps, swap the direction of movement of the newspapers.

Complicate the exercise:

- Add movement of feet to the exercise.
 - move at first the feet together back and forth
 - alternately back and forth
- Move the papers with your hands clockwise and with your feet counterclockwise, swap the direction.

Keeping the balloon moving in a circle



- Sit in a circle, keeping the balloon moving by hands only, try to avoid the balloon from dropping down.
- Keeping the balloon moving by feet only.

Complicate the exercise:

- Increase the number of balloons.

The joy of exercising with others

Lea (72 y) encourages to exercise because exercising makes you feel good and happy. You shouldn't take your exercising with deadly seriousness, although it is advisable to follow the instructions.

The most important thing is to start slowly and increase the intensity gradually. You don't always succeed right away, but this shouldn't depress you. "If you don't succeed at once, repeat the exercise up to ten times. If you still don't succeed, then it is good to do some other exercise and then try again. If you succeed, then it is advisable to repeat the movement correctly at least five times in a row, to gain maximum benefit."

Lea advises focusing on what you are doing. You shouldn't do something else at the same time. "I didn't succeed with all the exercises quite correctly, but it really doesn't matter. I couldn't manage the finger exercises very well, because those seemed difficult for me. "However, I sort of imitated the falling snow with my fingers, and that, too, was a good exercise," Lea smirks.

It was great fun for Lea's children and grandchildren too, who also gave it a try and exercised with Lea.



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