

## **Occupational therapy Upper limb clinic**

# **Upper limb stretching programme**

# Contents

- p.2**    **Contents**
- p.3**    **About upper limb stretches**
- p.4**    **Shoulder stretches**
- p.6**    **Elbow stretches**
- p.7**    **Forearm stretches**
- p.8**    **Wrist and finger stretches**
- p.10**   **Stretching the finger and knuckle joints**
- p.11**   **Thumb stretches**
- p.12**   **Hand stretches**
- p.13**   **Active stretching**
- p.14**   **Contact details**

This leaflet offers advice on upper limb stretches for your child, following your appointment at the upper limb clinic with our community occupational therapy team.

## About upper limb stretches

Upper limb stretches may help with:

- joint mobility and stiffness
- comfort
- help those with limited active movement to move.

Things to remember when helping your child with the stretches:

- support vulnerable joints
- start at joint nearest the body
- use steady, even movements
- stretch as far as the muscle tone will allow, hold this stretch then try again – never force a joint
- maintain each stretch for a count of 10 seconds
- it may help to count out aloud or sing when stretching – make it fun!
- doing stretches gently and slowly is the best to get a good stretch.

If you have any concerns regarding these stretches, please contact an occupational therapist.

## Shoulder stretches

**Flexion:** Place one hand around the elbow joint providing firm support to help stabilise the joint.

With your other hand on top of the shoulder you are stretching; lift the child's arm up towards the sky.



**Extension:** Place one hand around the elbow joint providing firm support to help stabilise the joint.

With your other hand on top of the shoulder you are stretching. Bring the child's arm back behind their body ensuring their body remains upright and doesn't twist or move with the arm.



**Abduction:** Place one hand above the elbow on the forearm.

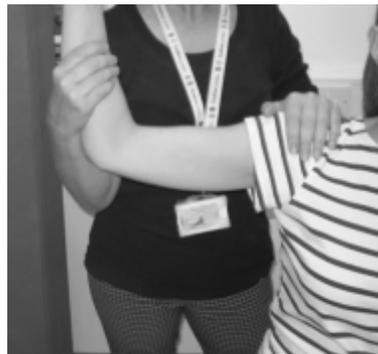
With your other hand on top of the shoulder you are stretching, lift the

child's arm up and away from the body until it is at a right angle like in the picture.



**Rotation:** Place one hand above the elbow joint with firm support.

With your other hand on top of the shoulder you are stretching, lift the child's arm up and away from the body. Once in this position rotate the arm by moving the hand up towards the sky then down towards the ground.



## Elbow stretches

**Flexion and extension:** Place one hand under the elbow joint with firm support and one hand around the wrist.

Move the wrist towards the ground stretching out the elbow.



## Forearm stretches

**Supination and pronation:** Place one hand around the elbow joint with firm support and the other hand around the wrist joint.

Turn the forearm to bring the palm up towards the ceiling and then down towards the ground.



**Supination**



**Pronation**

## Wrist and finger stretches

### Long finger flexor muscles stretch

**Extension:** Place your hand that is closest to the child just below their wrist with firm support.

With your other hand, support the child's hand and bend their wrist towards the ceiling with their fingers straight.



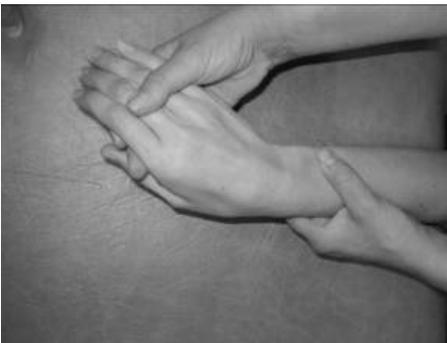
## Wrist stretch

**Deviation (radial and ulna):** Deviation means moving your hand from side to side. Place your hand that is closest to the child just below their wrist with firm support.

With your other hand, support the child's hand and turn their wrist towards their thumb and then towards their little finger.



**Radial side  
(side closest to  
the body)**



**Ulna side  
(side furthest  
away from the  
body)**

## Stretching the finger and knuckle joints

These are sometimes called the metacarpophalangeal or MCP joints.

**Flexion:** Place your hand that is closest to the child on their hand providing support to the thumb pad.

With your other hand, support the fingers and bend them towards the ground.



MCPs

**Extension:** Place your hand that is closest to the child providing support to the thumb pad.

With your other hand, support the fingers and straighten them towards the ceiling.



## Thumb stretches

**Abduction:** Place your hand that is closest to the child on their hand providing support to the thumb pad.

With your other hand, support the palm of the hand and slowly and gently move the thumb away from the hand.

It may help to massage the space near the base of the thumb prior to moving this joint.



## Hand stretches

### Opening the hand

- Step one – Place both hands around the child's forearm. Use deep pressure moving your thumbs away from each other to massage the forearm, gradually moving towards the child's hand.
- Step two – Place your thumbs inside the child's palm, using your fingers to stabilise the child's hand. Firmly stroke the child's skin towards the edges of the palm.

#### Step one



#### Step two



## Active stretching

Active stretching helps to make sure muscles and joints stay healthy, a range of movement is maintained, and muscle strengthening occurs. Whenever possible, encourage your child to stretch their arms, wrists and fingers actively.

Some activity ideas include:

- sports
- outdoor play
- swimming
- gymnastics
- singing songs with actions
- pushing and pulling activities
- animal walks
- drawing
- play-doh
- reaching and grasping for toys
- preparing snacks
- self-care, including dressing and bathing.

Provide the 'just right challenge' by encouraging your child to perform activities that they find difficult but still be successful in, for example, reaching for toys.

## **Contact details**

If you have any questions or concerns about your child's splint, please contact our children's community occupational therapy service:

### **Sunshine House (Southwark)**

27 Peckham Road  
London SE5 8UH  
t: 020 3049 8181

### **Mary Sheridan Centre (Lambeth)**

Dugard Way (off Renfrew Road)  
London SE11 4TH  
t: 020 3049 5976 or 020 3049 6020

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit [www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets](http://www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets)



## Useful contacts

### **Evelina London Medicines Helpline**

If you have any questions or concerns about your child's medicines, please speak to the staff caring for them or contact our helpline.

**t:** 020 7188 3003 10am to 5pm, Monday to Friday

**e:** [letstalkmedicines@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:letstalkmedicines@gstt.nhs.uk)

### **Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)**

To make comments or raise concerns about the Trust's services, please contact PALS. Ask a member of staff to direct you to the PALS office or:

**t:** 020 7188 8801 at St Thomas' **t:** 020 7188 8803 at

Guy's **e:** [pals@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@gstt.nhs.uk)

### **Language Support Services**

If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch using the following contact details.

**t:** 020 7188 8815 **fax:** 020 7188 5953

### **NHS Choices**

Provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make choices about your health.

**w:** [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

**Leaflet number: 4003/VER1**

Date published: January 2015

Review date: January 2018

© 2015 Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust