

"Bringing care and compassion home"



RANGE OF MOTION EXERCISES

Range-of-motion exercises (also called stretching, ROM or flexibility exercises) help preserve flexibility and mobility of the joints on which they are performed. Range of motion is the term that is used to describe the amount of movement you have at each joint. Every joint in the body has a "normal" range of motion. Joints maintain their normal range of motion by being moved. It is therefore very important to move all your joints every day. Stiff joints can cause pain and can make it hard for you to do your normal daily activities.



With range of motion exercises, gently straightening and bending the joints in a controlled manner as far as they comfortably will go can help condition the affected joints. During the course of a range-of-motion exercise program, the joints are stretched progressively farther until normal or near-normal range is achieved and maintained. This helps to maintain comfort while function is preserved.

There are different kinds of ROM exercises.

- Active ROM exercises - stretching exercises you can do yourself.
- Self ROM exercises - involve using a stronger arm to assist a weaker arm to perform the exercises, eliminating the need for caregiver assistance.
- Passive ROM exercises - done by a caregiver.

Often a combination of the types of the ROM exercises listed above will be used. Even within a limb the type of exercise used can vary depending on the strength of the different muscle groups.

ROM exercises are very important if you have to stay in bed or in a wheelchair. ROM exercises help keep your joints and muscles as healthy as possible. Without these exercises, blood flow and flexibility of your joints can decrease. Joints, such as your knees and elbows, could become stiff and locked without ROM exercises. Passive ROM exercises help keep joint areas flexible, but do not build up muscles or make them stronger.



RANGE OF MOTION ~ CONTINUED

It is important that all exercise be performed in moderation. Fatigue will only increase your weakness and rob you of energy that you need for your daily routines and the activities you enjoy. Do all ROM exercises smoothly and gently. Never force, jerk, or over-stretch a muscle. This can hurt the muscle or joint instead of helping. Move the joint slowly. This is especially important if you have muscle spasms (tightening). Move the joint only to the point of resistance. This is the point where you cannot bend the joint any further. Put slow, steady pressure on the joint until the muscle relaxes. Similarly, none of your exercises should cause you pain. If you do experience pain when exercising, stop that exercise, it may be that you are not doing the exercise correctly, or perhaps some modification to your exercise program must be made.



If your joints are very painful and swollen, move them gently through their range of motion. These exercises should be done slowly and steadily. It is important with ROM exercises not to force movements and to stop a movement if it causes you pain. Joint range of motion is done on one joint at a time. Stabilize with one hand just above the joint and place your other hand below the joint to move the part through its full range of motion.

Make ROM exercises a part of your daily routine. Do ROM exercises at the same time every day. Do the exercises in the same order to keep it simple and easy to remember. Start exercises at the head and work down toward the toes. Do them while bathing or while watching TV. This will make the time go faster and help you relax. You may want to break the exercise program into 2 or 3 sessions. You can then do the sessions at different times of the day instead of doing them all at once.