

## Save Your Wrists

© 2002 Lawrence Gold, certified Hanna somatic educator

**I**s wrist pain starting to interfere with your work?  
Wonder why?

Here's an answer: You get better at what you practice. Every time you grip something, you're practicing tightening the muscles of your forearms and hands. The muscles of your forearms control the movements of your wrists, hands and fingers. Have you noticed that they're getting tighter? Is it harder to open your hands than you remember? It's probably not arthritis; it's probably that your work is cultivating tight muscles. It's an occupational hazard for people whose work requires them to use their hands, a lot.

This condition is what's known as an overuse injury. It's called that, but what makes it an injury is that tight muscles compress the joints across which they pass, causing pain and stiffness. There may be no actual injury.

For your wrists, the tight muscles are in your forearms. Doing the same motions for months and years, you've practiced contracting those muscles, and now they're very good at contracting -- too good, and not so good at relaxing, anymore.

By the way, what's true of your wrists and hands is also true of your back, shoulders, and neck.

There's a way out. Groom out the muscular tensions so they don't accumulate. Recover the ability to relax those muscles. Take the stress off your wrists and hands. It's easy. The following exercise shows you how. It takes about five minutes. Do it frequently during the day for a few days.

You might be surprised at how well it works.

Here's the exercise sequence, based on a method of muscle retraining called Somatic Training.

## Freeing Your Hands, Wrists and Forearms

If you have pain already, start gently and do a small amount. As your pain decreases, increase the movements to your new comfortable limit. Never force. This is not a stretch, it is a coordination and control exercise that improves your ability to relax your muscles and so give more slack to your tendons.

**THE ESSENCE OF THIS MANEUVER: equalizing the effort you use to grip with your hands with the effort you use to spread your elbows apart (Never force this movement or “work through the pain; work within your comfort zone.)**



**STARTING POSITION: sitting, hands clasped (fingers interlaced) in front of your face, elbows together**

1. Press with the fingertips of your index fingers. Feel the effort. Now, do the same with each of the other fingers. Squeeze and release a few times, each.

*This movement gives you a distinct feeling of the strength of each finger.*



2. Equalize the pressure of all of your fingers and grip your hands together, firmly. Maintain this grip until instructed to relax it.
3. Spread your elbows until the grip of your hands prevents further spreading.
4. Simultaneously and slowly ...

- spread your elbows about 2",
- relax your wrists a bit, so they bend backward.



5. Straighten your wrists a bit by using the muscles that bend the wrist, keeping your elbows the same distance apart.

*This action gives you control of the muscles that bend your wrists. Your wrists bend backward a little more, each time.*

**Repeat Steps 3. through 5. until you get no further gain in flexibility and your wrists are bent backward to your comfortable limit.**



6. Relax your hands a bit, so your fingers begin to straighten.
7. Regrip your hands, keeping your elbows and wrists in the same position.

**Repeat Steps 6. and 7. until you have fully relaxed your fingers and they are straight.**



8. When your fingers and wrists are straight, continue to grip, relax, and push your hands down until your elbows are straight. (Do not force. Work within your comfort zone.)

*Your palms and wrists now feel open and relaxed.*



**NEW POSITION: hands clasped in front of your chest, palms facing forward, elbows pointing forward**

**(Never force this movement or “work through the pain; work within your comfort zone.)**

1. Press and release each of your fingers.
2. Grip your hands together, fingers interlaced, so all fingers press equally.
3. Spread your elbows apart until the grip of your hands prevents going wider.
4. Simultaneously and slowly
  - relax your hands
  - spread your elbows 2”
5. Regrip your hands, keeping your elbows in position.



**Repeat Steps 4.and 5., pushing your hands further away, each time, until your fingers area straight.**



6. Continue the movements, pushing your hands forward, until your arms are straight. (Do not force. Work within your comfort zone.)





**NEXT POSITION: hands clasped behind your neck, palms facing upward**

1. Press and release each of your fingers.
2. Grip your hands together, fingers interlaced, so all fingers press equally.
3. Partially straighten your elbows (push your hands upward) until the grip of your hands prevents going wider.
4. Simultaneously and slowly
  - relax your hands
  - push your hands upward by straightening your elbows.
5. Regrip your hands, keeping your elbows in position.
6. Repeat Steps 4. and 5., gripping, relaxing, and pushing upward, until your fingers and elbows are straight. (Do not force. Work within your comfort zone.)

**Shake your hands out gently. Open and close your hands and feel how much softer they feel.**

