

AKTIV COAST HEALTHCARE

One Team. Custom Approach. Real Results.

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Hand Osteoarthritis Home Care Guide

Heberden's & Bouchard's Nodes (DIP / PIP Joint Osteoarthritis)

This guide outlines your personalized care plan for hand osteoarthritis, organized by where each treatment takes place. Osteoarthritis in the finger joints cannot be reversed, but pain, swelling, and stiffness respond well to a combined approach — please follow this plan consistently and bring questions to your next visit.

AT THE CLINIC — Provided by Your Aktiv Coast Team

Class IV Laser Therapy (LiteCure®)

High-intensity laser applied directly to the affected DIP/PIP joints to help reduce swelling, inflammation, and pain, and to improve joint mobility.

Parameter	Protocol
Frequency	3 sessions per week
Duration	3–4 weeks
Total Visits	8–12 sessions
Session Length	Approx. 10–15 minutes per session
Administered By	Your Aktiv Coast provider

Manual/Joint Assessment & Reassessment

Your provider will periodically reassess joint swelling, range of motion, and grip strength to track your progress and adjust your plan.

Optional In-Clinic Adjuncts

- Paraffin wax hand bath — applied prior to treatment/exercise to reduce stiffness (ask your provider if this is available at your visit)
- Guidance on joint protection techniques and adaptive tool recommendations

AT HOME — Your Daily Self-Care Routine

1. Self-Traction (Long-Axis Distraction)

Gently pull along the length of the affected finger joint(s) to create mild joint distraction, then release.

Parameter	Protocol
Sets	2 sets
Reps	10–12 short-duration holds per set
Frequency	2–3 times per day
Hold Duration	Brief hold, then release (avoid forcing or pain)
Note	Stop if you notice increased swelling or sharp pain

2. Ice

Parameter	Protocol
When	After activity/use, or during flare-ups of swelling

Duration	10–15 minutes per joint area
Frequency	1–3 times per day as needed
Method	Wrap ice pack or use a cold compress; do not apply ice directly to skin

3. Hand & Finger Mobility Exercise Program

This is a guideline-endorsed exercise routine (referenced by ACR/Arthritis Foundation, NICE, and EULAR hand OA management guidance) to maintain range of motion, reduce stiffness, and support grip/pinch strength alongside your traction protocol. Perform once daily; move slowly and stay within a comfortable range — mild stretch is fine, sharp pain is not.

Exercise	How To	Reps / Sets	Hold
Tendon glides	From a straight hand, move through: hook fist -> straight fist -> full fist -> back to straight hand	10 reps through the full sequence, once daily	Hold each position 3-5 sec
Thumb-to-fingertip opposition	Touch thumb tip to the tip of each finger in turn (index to pinky)	10 reps per finger, once daily	Brief touch, no hold needed
Table-top finger spread	Place hand flat on table, spread fingers apart, then squeeze together	10 reps, once daily	Hold spread position 3-5 sec
Composite fist-to-full-extension	Make a full fist, then fully straighten/fan fingers out	10 reps, once daily	Hold each end position 3 sec
Isometric grip (putty, stress ball, or rolled sock)	Squeeze a soft ball or putty in the palm	10 reps, once daily	Hold squeeze 5-10 sec
Thumb web-space stretch (if thumb/CMC1 involved)	Gently pull thumb away from palm using other hand, to a light stretch	4 reps, once daily	Hold 30 sec

Progression: begin gently, especially during flare-ups. If a joint is acutely swollen or painful, reduce reps/skip that joint for a day or two, then resume.

Reference / patient handout - Versus Arthritis: Exercises for the Fingers, Hands and Wrists: <https://www.versusarthritis.org/about-arthritis/exercising-with-arthritis/exercises-for-healthy-joints/exercises-for-the-fingers-hands-and-wrists/>

Your provider can demonstrate each exercise in clinic and tailor reps/sets to your specific joint involvement.

4. Joint Protection & Daily Activity Tips

- Use built-up/larger-grip handles for kitchen tools, pens, and gardening equipment
- Use jar openers and key turners to reduce sustained pinch-grip stress
- Avoid prolonged tight gripping or repetitive fine pinching where possible
- Take short breaks during repetitive hand tasks (typing, knitting, sailing lines/rigging work, golf grip, etc.)

5. Nutritional Support (Available at Aktiv Coast)

The following supplements may provide additional anti-inflammatory and joint support. Please confirm suitability with your provider before starting, especially if you take blood thinners, have a GI ulcer history, or are pregnant/nursing.

Product	Category	Suggested Dose	Key Ingredients
Orthomega 820	Omega-3	2–3 softgels daily, with meals (approx. 1.6–2.5 g combined EPA/DHA)	820 mg EPA/DHA + DPA per softgel (triglyceride form)
Chondro-Flx	Joint / OA Support	1 capsule, 3–4x daily (on an empty stomach if tolerated)	Glucosamine sulfate, chondroitin sulfate, bromelain, vitamin C

Traumeric	Inflammation Control	2 capsules daily, or as directed by your provider	Standardized turmeric (curcumin), bromelain, quercetin, rutin
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Omega-3 dosing note: the anti-inflammatory dose reported in joint/inflammatory arthritis research is approximately 2.7 g/day combined EPA+DHA (roughly 3 softgels of Orthomega 820). Lower doses (1/day) still provide general cardiovascular and joint support but fall below the dose typically associated with a measurable anti-inflammatory effect.

Note: allow 4+ weeks of consistent use to assess benefit from joint-support supplements. Ask our front desk team about pricing and availability.

FROM ANOTHER PROVIDER — If Recommended by Your Aktiv Coast Team

Custom Hand Splinting / Orthoses

An occupational therapist or certified hand therapist can fit a custom rigid, neoprene, or ring-style splint for specific joints — particularly helpful during flare periods (increased swelling/inflammation) to offload the joint short-term.

Topical Anti-Inflammatory Medication

Topical NSAID gels (e.g., diclofenac gel) applied directly over the affected joints are a first-line pharmacologic option for hand OA. Ask your physician or pharmacist if this is appropriate for you.

Physician / Rheumatology Referral

If you develop new swelling in the knuckle (MCP) or wrist joints, prolonged morning stiffness over 1 hour, or symptoms in a single joint that are unusually red, hot, or severe, please let your provider know — further blood work or imaging may be recommended to rule out other joint conditions.

Surgical Consultation

In cases where conservative care does not adequately manage symptoms over time, a hand surgeon can discuss options such as joint fusion or arthroplasty. This is typically considered only after conservative approaches have been fully trialed.

FURTHER READING & REFERENCES

For patients who would like to learn more about hand osteoarthritis and its management, the following are reputable resources:

Arthritis Society Canada — Hand & Wrist Osteoarthritis: [https://arthritis.ca/about-arthritis/arthritis-types-\(a-z\)/types/osteoarthritis](https://arthritis.ca/about-arthritis/arthritis-types-(a-z)/types/osteoarthritis)

American College of Rheumatology — Osteoarthritis Patient Fact Sheet: <https://rheumatology.org/patients/osteoarthritis>

OrthoInfo (AAOS) — Arthritis of the Hand: <https://orthoinfo.aaos.org/en/diseases--conditions/arthritis-of-the-hand>

NHS — Osteoarthritis Overview: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/osteoarthritis/>

This handout is for general education and does not replace individualized medical advice. Please contact Aktiv Coast Healthcare with any questions about your specific treatment plan.

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