

Let us introduce you to
grip strength and hand health:
shake hands . . . you'll be glad you met.



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For more information about hand health, please visit IronMind's website at www.strongandhealthyhands.com.

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IronMind has been at the forefront of the strength world since 1988, and one of our specialties is grip strength and hand health. While we cannot give you medical advice or wave a magic wand, we are sure we can make a real difference in preventing, reducing, or eliminating pains from your elbows to your fingertips. We'd like you to give IronMind's grip strength and hand health tools a try and be our next success story.

STRONG HANDS, HEALTHY HANDS

How to Prevent, Reduce, or Eliminate Pains
from Your Elbows to Your Fingertips

by Randall J. Strossen, Ph.D.



In pain? Haven't been active for a long time?

Please consult with your primary health care provider
before embarking on this or any other training program.

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Do this for a total of 12 squeezes and then repeat with your other hand. Go back and do it again with your first hand and then finish off with a second set for your other hand.

For full range of motion, use the Zenith gripper, especially designed for a comfortable fit and feel in your hand; and for something soft and that can be rotated, use the IronMind EGG. Two sets of about 12 reps should be perfect.

2. Expand-Your-Hand Bands – 2 x 10–12, each hand

Slip all five fingers into an Expand-Your-Hand Band so that the band is at about the height of your fingernails. Maintaining concentration and continuous tension, extend all five fingers outward. Hold the extended position for 1 or 2 full seconds, slowly release the tension and relax. Repeat for a total of 10–12 repetitions and then do the same with your other hand. Repeat with your first hand, and then again with your second hand.



3. Wrist Defender – 2 x 12, each side

There are a variety of exercises that can be done to improve hand health using the Wrist Defender:

Limp arm circles – 2 x 12, each arm

While standing or sitting, hold your Wrist Defender with your arm hanging straight down and do about 12 easy circles, moving clockwise with your whole arm, while keeping your arm just about straight and everything from your shoulder to your wrist as relaxed as possible. Do the same with your other arm. Go back to your first arm and repeat the same motion, but this time do your circles moving counterclockwise. Repeat with your other arm.

Limp wrist circles – 2 x 12, each hand

Do the same motion as in the previous exercise, but this time, rotate only your hand. Keep everything above the wrist stationary. Do about 12 circles for each hand, first in a clockwise motion and then counterclockwise.

Wrist curls – 2 x 12, each hand

While seated and holding your Wrist Defender in your hand, place your forearm on top of your thigh with your hand extending past your knee and your palm facing up. Gently lower your wrist as far as it comfortably wants to go, then curl up your hand. Repeat about 12 times and then put the weight in your other hand and follow the same steps: Switch back to your first hand and this time do the same exercise with your palm facing down (reverse wrist curls); repeat with your other hand.

Repeat the limp wrist circles – 2 x 12, to finish.

It's that simple. If you have had reasonable luck in the genetics lottery and pay attention to the general principles outlined here, this simple routine will work wonders for maintaining the good hand health you currently enjoy, so go ahead: paint a picture, play tennis, change the oil . . . put those happy, healthy hands to good use.

. . . this simple routine will work wonders
for maintaining the good hand health you
currently enjoy . . .

Reducing pain

Ouch! Can't squeeze anything? Can't even brush your teeth or comb your hair without pains anywhere from your elbows to your fingertips?

First step: check with your primary health care provider and see what they advise. Ideally you have a doctor who is familiar with this sort of discomfort and can give you a sound diagnosis and help you get on the road to recovery.

Second step: if you've got inflammation, your primary health care provider might advise a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory, such as ibuprofen. Ice might also be advised as a way to reduce any swelling you might be experiencing.

Third step: once your doctor has given you the green light to proceed, use the training routine described for prevention, but with light, rather than moderate, exertion levels, and do 1 set in the morning, another at midday if possible, and a third in the evening. Repeat this program 5 days per week.

Building world-class strength

Suppose you want to develop world-class levels of strength from your fingertips to your elbows. Where does good hand health come into play for you and how do you achieve and maintain it?

Train smart

First, to develop this level of lower arm and grip strength, you will necessarily be doing a lot of very heavy training, and the key is to always adhere to the **basic principles of sound training**. As obvious as this advice may sound, grip training is often done independently of lifting or general strength training, and what might be obvious in the lifting world is not the case when talking about grip. Be aware of advice that might not only be off base in terms of its effectiveness, but also likely to produce injuries. Remember: anyone can give training advice and anyone can train hard—but if you're not training smart, you're probably courting an injury.

Stay healthy

Second, as an extension of this idea, you have to stay healthy to train hard—it is necessary to make gains in your strength. One of the most knowledgeable weightlifting coaches in the U.S., Jim Schmitz, explained why of two particular lifters he had coached, one had gotten much stronger and had racked up more successes than the other one. The reason was that the more successful lifter had been injured a lot less, so his training had fewer interruptions, with fewer periods of losing those hard-won gains, and his rewards included winning an Olympic medal.

Protecting your health plays a vital role if you're interested in being strong, and this concept applies as much to your hands as it does to your legs and back, and with that goal in mind, keep the following ideas in mind during your training:

- warm up properly
- stretch appropriately
- allow for sufficient recovery time in between workouts
- think beyond just your muscular strength and have respect for your soft tissue and joints
- if you're whipped mentally from your workout, your body is probably redlining as well
- sometimes a short break from heavy training is the "open sesame" to your next round of gains

Consistent with these ideas, your IronMind EGG, Zenith grippers, Expand-Your-Hand Bands, and Wrist Defender are vital tools in your quest to hit the highest levels of grip strength.

1. Use these tools to warm up before your heavy training. For example, you can do some light-effort reps with your Zenith gripper or IronMind EGG before picking up the first Captains of Crush (CoC) or IMTUG gripper in your workout. Don't think warming up is for wimps: it is equally effective whether you are striving to close the CoC Trainer or the CoC No. 4 gripper.

2. Zenith grippers, the IronMind EGG, Expand-Your-Hand Bands, and the Wrist Defender are also perfect for a cool-down following an intense workout, so after you've given it your all on some maximum intensity work sets, back off and use these training tools for 1–2 sets of moderate effort in the 10–15 rep range.

3. Especially if you are not already incorporating these tools in your basic grip training, and you have healthy hands and want to keep them that way, follow the prevention training program (outlined above) on your off days.