

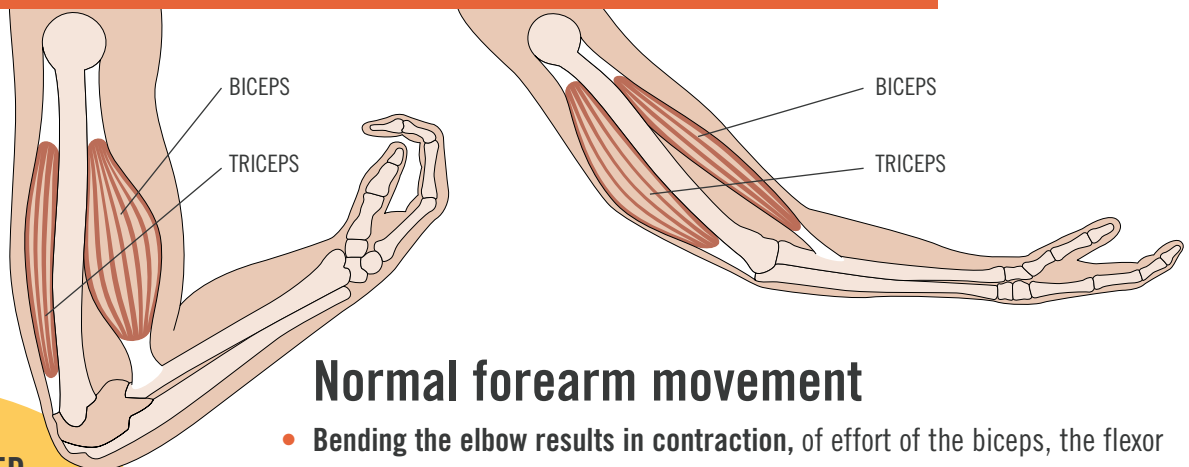


Releasing Retractions

A gentle method for the client that is simple and easier for the caregiver

Some clients have retractions (contraction or stiffness) and caregivers are unable to release or easily straighten out fingers, arms, or legs. This makes their work difficult when they must dress clients, provide hygienic care, change a bandage, seat a client in a chair, etc.

ALL BODY MOVEMENT RESULTS IN ANTAGONIST MUSCLE (OPPOSITE) REACTION



FORCING RETRACTED LIMBS: A RISKY SITUATION

- Physical difficulties and psychological discomfort (stress, worry, fear of hurting a client) for the caregiver.
- Pain and the risk of injury for the client

Normal forearm movement

- **Bending the elbow results in contraction**, of effort of the biceps, the flexor (retracted) muscle of the forearm.
- **Unfolding (straightening out) the elbow results in contraction**, of effort of the triceps, the muscle opposite to the biceps and the extensor of the forearm.
- **The contraction of a flexor muscle sends a message** through the nervous system to the antagonist muscle, the extensor, for it to release and vice-versa.
- **A limb's flexor muscle and an extensor muscle** cannot be contracted at the same time – the contraction of one prevents that of the other.

Client with retracted limbs

- **The limbs are blocked.** Retraction is caused by constant contraction of a flexor muscle. The client's willingness is absent or insufficient for them to contract the triceps and unfold the elbow – the biceps remain contracted and the forearm cannot move.
- **To achieve relaxation, the caregiver uses a trick; massaging the triceps.** This sends a message to the spinal cord that the muscle is contracting (even if this is not the case). In this way, by reflex, the spinal cord tells the biceps to relax, at last allowing movement.
- **At practically the same moment, the caregiver pulls gently on the client's forearm,** and then the elbow relaxes slightly. If this doesn't work, the caregiver does not press the issue: the joint could be calcified.

Method

LEADING TO RELEASE OF RETRACTIONS

ORIENTATION (HOW TO)

- **Before using the method to relax a client's retractions,** start by establishing a relationship, a rapport with the client. This quality of care helps the client to relax, and this leads to fewer difficulties in achieving mobility of the limbs.
- **Try to ease a persistent contraction by massaging** the opposite (antagonist) muscle. This is useful for muscular blockages. If it relates to a bone problem, the limbs won't move.
- **The degree to which a joint can be opened** depends on the client's capabilities; open only to the extent possible for each client.
- **Open the joint to obtain at least a sufficient extension** to accomplish hygienic care, to put on an incontinence brief, to dress a client, change a bandage, etc.
- **The more often the method is repeated,** the greater the likelihood that the client will achieve a better degree of release (it will open "more and more") and the movement of the limbs will also require less effort on the part of the caregiver.
- **The method can also be used outside of a caregiving situation** in order to gain a greater degree of mobility and to relax the client's limbs (state of rest).

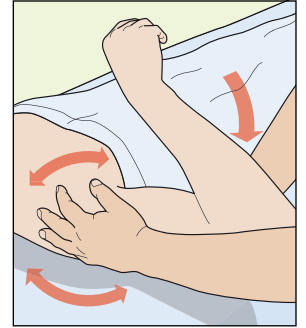
STEPS

- 1 **Place** a hand on the relaxed muscle, the one opposite the contracted muscle.
- 2 **Massage** the muscle for a few seconds with your whole hand.
- 3 **Gently pull** the flexed limb, massaging all the while, until resistance or blockage is felt.
- 4 **Stop** massaging and wait a few seconds.
- 5 **Resume** the massage. As soon as there is a release, pull the limb gently.
- 6 **Stop** as soon as there is resistance.
- 7 **Repeat** the steps two, three or four times.

HOW TO RELEASE THE VARIOUS JOINTS

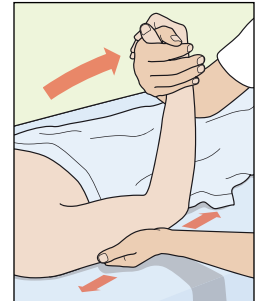
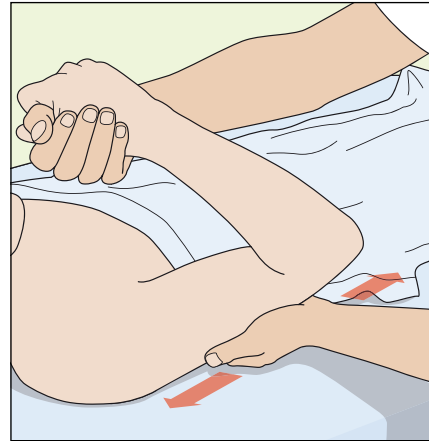
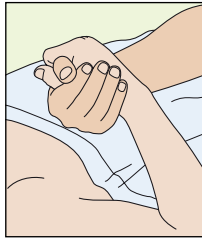
SHOULDER - SPREADING OUT THE ARM TO ACCESS THE ARMPIT

- Place one hand on the top of the client's shoulder. (deltoid muscle released)
- Place your other hand under their arm.
- Massage the shoulder muscle (deltoid).
- At the same time, gently spread open the client's arm until you feel resistance or blockage.
- Stop spreading the arm and wait a few seconds.
- Resume the massage and gently pull until the arm until it is sufficiently spread apart from the body to allow access to the armpit.



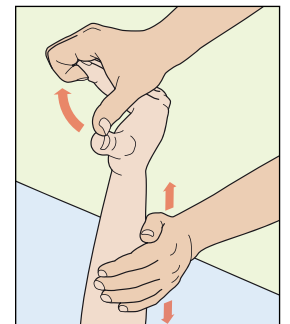
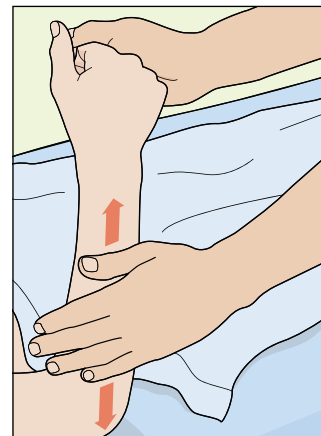
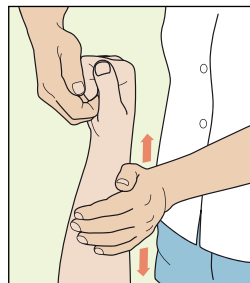
ELBOW - UNFOLDING THE FOREARM

- Take the client's hand with a thumb hold.
- Place your other hand on their triceps (behind their arm) the antagonist muscle – opposite to the retracted muscle (biceps).
- Massage the triceps.
- While continuing to massage, gently pull the client's hand until a feeling of resistance or blockage is felt.
- Stop massaging and pulling and wait a few seconds.
- Resume the massage. As soon as there is a release, pull gently.



HAND - OPENING THE FINGERS

- Slide the tips of your fingers between the client's palm and fingers and gently hook into them.
- Place your other hand on the top of the client's forearm.
- Massage the relaxed muscles of the top of the forearm, all the while gently pulling with the ends of your fingers on the first joint (phalanges) of the client's hand.
- Stop as soon as resistance or blockage is felt and wait a few seconds.
- Repeat the massage of the top of the forearm muscles while gently pulling the second joints (middle phalanx).
- Repeat the muscle massage of the top of the forearm.
- Release the thumb by starting to unfold the end – an opening of the rest of the hand should follow.



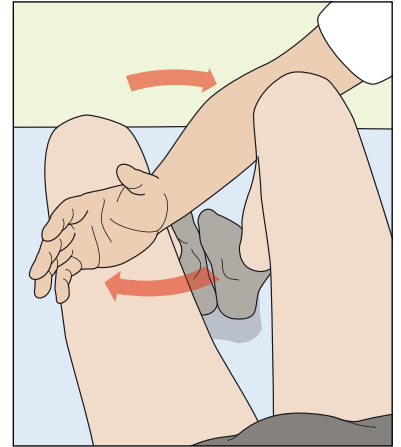
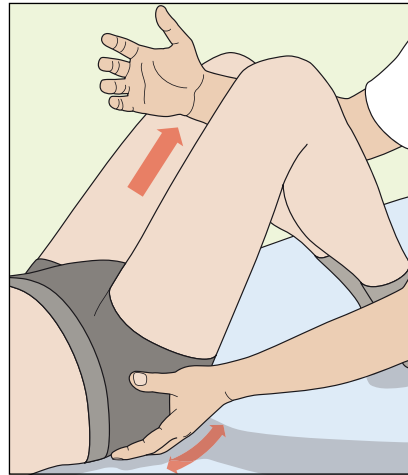
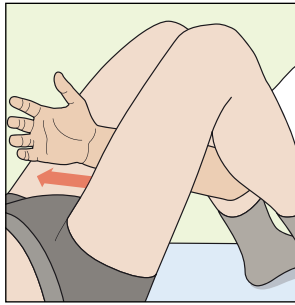
THE GRASPING REFLEX

Whenever a client's hand grasps onto an article of clothing, the bedside, a safety bar, or the caregiver's wrist:

- Slowly straighten out (release) the client's little finger.
- Wait a few seconds
- Gently release the other fingers. They should no longer offer any resistance.

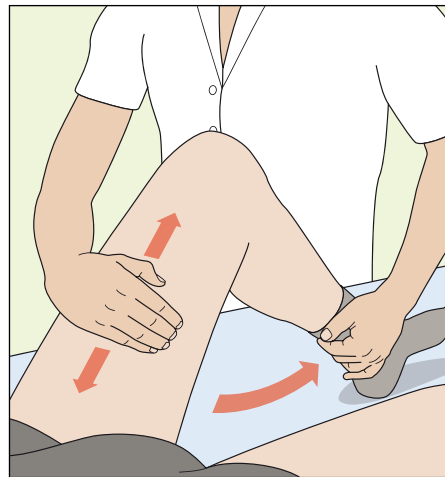
HIPS - SPREADING THE THIGHS

- Slide your hand and forearm between the client's legs with your hand coming out between the client's thighs.
- Lightly lift your forearm up to the client's knees.
- With your other hand, massage the side of the client's buttock.
- With your forearm placed between the client's knees, move it in order to spread the thighs.
- Resume buttock massage while spreading the client's thighs (with your arm between the client's knees) until you have achieved an adequate degree of release to provide the required care.
- Working in teams of two caregivers. It is helpful to work in pairs to release retracted hips: while one massages the side of the client's buttock, the other gently separates the knees.



KNEE - STRAIGHTENING THE LEG

- Place your hand behind the client's ankle.
- Place your other hand on the antagonist muscle at the top of the thigh (quadriceps)
- Massage the top of the thigh and gently pull on the ankle until resistance or a blockage is felt.
- Discontinue the massage and gently pull. Wait a few seconds.
- Resume the massage. Once release occurs, gently pull.
- Continue the process until the required stretching out of the leg is achieved (ex. enough to seat the client in a specialized chair for seniors).



CAUTION

Use of this guide is not a substitute for comprehensive training in ARS, and does not guarantee safety improvements in all situations. Adjustments are always necessary according to the particular details of an actual work situation.



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