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Wrist exercises for gamers

Any gamer worth their salt has experienced some hand discomfort while playing. It doesn't matter if you've been going hard on a console or as a member of the PC master race, extended periods of gaming can lead to noticeable hand pain, as well as long term hand injuries. As the link between excessive video gaming and hand pain becomes more clear, we'll want to take steps to alleviate and prevent injuries. There can be a lot of options out there when it comes to finding the right hand exercises for gamers. It's important to know what you should be stretching and why you should be stretching it. What Causes Hand Pain From Gaming? Tension is the enemy of our hands and wrists; the hours spent hitting buttons furiously and devoting full attention to the game have our hands wearing down due to the tension. For almost every console gamer, the shape of the controllers can contribute immensely to how much tension is being placed on your hands. Extended periods of playing time will cause discomfort regardless of what you're playing, but games that require many button presses (as well as a wide usage of buttons on the controller) can do the most damage to your hands and wrists. In competitive Super Smash Bros. Melee, there can be hundreds of inputs per minute on the less-than-ideally shaped GameCube controller; some players have had to retire from the game due to excessive hand injuries. A long term (but costly) solution is the development of new controllers; the BOXX is an example of creating a controller layout that eases tension on the hands while still allowing the game to be played at the same level as with a GameCube controller. But the real prescription is making sure to take extended breaks (10-15 minutes) every hour or so, and to incorporate hand stretches into your routine. This reduces the tension buildup in your hands and allows you to play longer, with more intensity, and also with better prospects for your hands' long term health. It's also worth noting that PC gamers still have to worry about hand issues; every type of gaming has players increase tension in their hands and joints while focusing on the game at hand. Even if you aren't contorting your hands to fit some whacky controller, breaks and stretches are important. Do Hand Exercises Improve Performance? Are they going to help you get good at the game? No, not a chance. What hand stretches can do for gamers is help prolong their careers much more than if they didn't stretch at all. Hand pain can often be a hindrance since it leads to people playing less, and for those looking to be competitive, hand pain can deter players from learning difficult to execute techniques. With proper hand stretching, you can reduce a lot of hand pain, which will ultimately give you more practice time as well as healthier hands to practice harder tech in games; so in this way, your performance can improve. The Best Hand Stretch Exercises For Gamers The best video for doing hand and wrist exercises before gaming is this short five minute video by Dr. Levi Harrison. It covers the basics for keeping your hands fresh before and during breaks from gaming. Memorize these or just keep the video handy for when you're about to get back to playing: It's important to remember that if you're experiencing severe hand and wrist pain to always consult a doctor; hand stretches won't cut it here. Also, even if one set of exercises doesn't seem to work for you, be sure to ask around for more.

Any stretching is sure to be better than none at all. You're gearing up for an intense few hours of play. Food - check. Drinks - check. You pick up your controller. Then it hits you, that familiar cramping of the wrist, the dull ache in your fingers. Much like any activity where you are using your hands for long periods of time, like typing and playing certain sports, holding and using a game controller or keyboard for a prolonged period of time can put stress on your wrists, hands, and fingers. Whether you are gearing up for an intense few hours of play or are just resting in between matches, here are some hand stretches to keep you gaming at your best. Since we all tend to game on different platforms, the stretches you should focus on will differ. For PC players, wrist exercises will help maintain a full range of motion while finger and hand exercises will allow you to reach and hit all the keys. For consoles, clutching the controller can result in tension in your hands, so it's important to focus on hand and finger exercises. Again, for console players, you should also place particular focus on your thumbs and their connected joint, known as the basal joint. Hands & Fingers Gripping You may have seen assorted people using stress balls as a way to calm down, but the act of gripping and squeezing something in your hand can stretch out those muscles. You don't need to exclusively use a stress ball to get the benefits - rolled-up towels, tennis balls, and even small stuffed animals can do the trick. Simply squeeze your chosen object in one hand, hold it for a couple of seconds, release it, then repeat. When you have done a few repetitions, switch to your other hand and repeat the process. This basic exercise improves circulation within your hands, reducing potential pain, numbness, and muscle cramps. There are even certain handheld objects that are designed to help increase circulation using different fillings, such as iron, inside the ball/object itself, providing more resistance. Stretch Your Fingers This exercise is perfect for between-game breaks to relieve tension out of your fingers and thumbs. Fully open your hand, keeping each finger apart. Using your other hand, lightly push each individual finger back until you feel it begin to stretch. Don't push it so far that it causes you pain, just enough to make your finger muscles feel loose and limber. You may hear your fingers crack while you do this but that is just gas from the synovial fluid escaping from your joints. Make sure to repeat this for your other hand. To further this, you can interlock all of your fingers, with your palms facing your body. Using your fingers, push your palms towards your body; you may hear your fingers and knuckles crack. Finger Lifts Place your hand palm down on a level surface, ensuring that your hand and all of your fingers remain flat. Staring from either your pinky or your thumb, gently lift a single finger while keeping the rest flat. Lift your finger as far as it will go without hurting yourself - you should be feeling a nice stretch in your hand and fingers. Lower it and repeat with the rest of your fingers. When all of your fingers have been individually stretched, gently lift all of them at once, still keeping your palm flat. Do the same exercise on your other hand. The purpose of this exercise is to not only relieve tension in your hand but to increase the flexibility and dexterity of your fingers. This can help you achieve those quick reaction times and game-saving plays. Finger Fan Particularly for PC gamers, the more flexible your fingers are, the faster and easier you can reach certain keys. Think of a piano player where they are able to play five or six horizontal keys from one position, just by stretching their fingers. Flexibility is something that will develop over time but you'll need to keep your fingers loose and relaxed to be able to stretch during play. To that end, the Finger Fan will help increase your flexibility, allowing you to reach the required keys or buttons quicker. To do the Finger Fan, you first need to form your hand into a fist. Slowly stretch your fingers outwards, as far as they can go. Hold that position, then slowly form a fist again. Repeat for a total of five finger fan stretches before doing five on your other hand. Making A Fist This is another exercise great for those short moments in between games and you may have been done something similar in the past. Take your hand and open it as wide as you can, feel your fingers and hands stretch out - hold that position. Now, close your hand into a fist, squeezing it until you can feel a light tension - again, hold that position. Continue doing this for at least ten repetitions on each hand. This exercise promotes better circulation in your hands, especially important if you have been gripping a controller, or using a keyboard for long periods of time. Thumb Extension Particularly prevalent for console gamers, the thumb is one of the driving forces behind gaming success. Since it does get some heavy use, it is important to stretch out, and take care of, your thumbs. Hold your hand out palm up and push your thumb across your hand using your lower thumb joint. Hold this for a few seconds, relax your hand, then push your thumb across your hand again. Repeat with your other hand. How to strengthen your wrists Wrist Rotation This is an exercise you can do on its own or with light dumbbells. Much like stretching before and after a gym workout, it's important to work your wrist muscles through their full range of motion. Place your arm out straight, resting it on a bench or other object if needed. Make a fist, and start by moving your hand down, then up, using the wrist joint. Do not move your arm or the exercise is ineffective. Repeat this process at least ten times on each hand. Follow this by doing circular rotations of your wrist to ensure a full stretch. Straight Arm Stretch Make sure you have a little bit of room in front of you for this one as it involves a fully extended arm. To start, you want to extend and hold your arm at shoulder height, holding your hand up like you are telling someone to stop. Your hand should be at 90 degrees to your arm. Place your other hand along the top of your extended hand and gently pull back towards you. You should be able to feel your wrist and a little bit of your arm begin to stretch. Hold the stretch for 30 seconds, then relax your arm for 5 seconds. Gently pull back again, hold for 30 seconds, then release. On the same arm, you want to get into the same position, with your hand 90 degrees to your arm but this time have your fingers pointing down. Your palm should be facing you. Using your other hand, place it against the base of your outstretched hand, just under your wrist. Gently push your hand towards your body until you feel it begin to stretch. If you are feeling pain, readjust and try again. Hold the stretch for 30 seconds, then relax your arm. Repeat this exercise on your other arm. Shoulders Cross Arm Stretch It is important to remember to stretch your shoulders after and during prolonged gaming sessions. As you sit, holding a controller, or using a keyboard, your shoulders tend to become bunched up and the muscles can tighten. For maximum effectiveness start this exercise either sitting up straight or standing. Starting with your dominant arm, let's say right arm, hold it out straight, then slowly move it across your body, resting it behind your left shoulder. Take your left arm, place it behind your right elbow, and push your arm gently further over your shoulder. You should start to feel your upper right arm and your shoulder begin to stretch. Push your arm as far as it can go without causing pain and hold it for 30 seconds. Release and gently lower your arms to your sides. Repeat with your other arm. Ear To Shoulder A simple exercise, all you need to do is sit or stand up straight, and tilt your head to either the left or right like you are trying to touch your ear to your shoulder. Go as far as you can without raising your shoulder. You should feel a nice stretch in your neck and shoulder regions. This will loosen up tight and knotted muscles. There you have it, a few quick exercises you can do, to ensure your gaming sessions are long, happy, and filled with glory. Share on FacebookTweet on TwitterContentsHow Your Wrist WorksWrist Stretches and ExtensionsWrist ExercisesAre you recovering from a wrist sprain or a strain? Or do you suffer from pain caused by hours on your keyboard or your gaming mouse?Most traumatic wrist injuries are the result of a fall, not the actual fall, but trying to stop your fall as you hit the ground. If you have ever taken a spill from a skateboard, bicycle or tripped over a toy or pet, you understand.But wrist pain can also be caused by long-term use or repetitive stress, arthritis or carpal tunnel syndrome.Swelling of your wrist from injury or overuse causes painful pressure on the median nerve. This compression is often referred to as carpal tunnel syndrome and leads to numbness, weakness, and tingling on the side of your hand near the thumb.Whatever the cause of your wrist pain, if left untreated it can become a serious problem.The exercises that follow can help relieve pain and strengthen weak wrist and reduce pain and swelling.Wrist pain caused by long-term use or repetitive stress can become a serious problem left untreated.How Your Wrist WorksThere are ten bones connected to the wrist joint, two from your forearm, the radius on the thumb side and the ulna on the opposite side and eight bones in the hand, which are called carpals.The muscles of your forearms and wrists allow for flexion, extension, and wrist rotation. Hand rotations called supination and pronation originate from your elbow joints. Any circular wrist exercises are a combination of elbow and wrist movements.Your forearm muscles have a great potential for strength and flexibility improvement, and few people use them to their full capability.Strength training for the wrists can lead to significant improvementWrist Stretches and ExtensionsStart with simple wrist stretches and extensions.Hold your arm straight out in front of you with your palm down. Bend at your wrist while pointing your hand toward the floor. With your other hand, gently bend your wrist farther until you feel a mild stretch in your forearm and hold for 15 to 30 seconds.Relax and repeat and alternate wrists.Prayer Stretch - To increase your wrist flexibility further, press your palms together in front of your chest keeping your fingers close together. Without forcing them, slowly lower your hands until you feel the muscles and tendons in your wrist begin to stretch.You should feel only a gentle tugging pressure.Hold this position for up to 5 seconds and then relax and repeat.As your strength and flexibility increase, increase the length of time you hold this prayer stretch.More good wrist stretches by Global Bodyweight Training:Wrist ExercisesFollow these and similar wrist stretches with simple exercises and then progress slowly to avoid additional pain or injury to your fingers, hands or wrist injury. Regular wrist stretches and exercises should help to increase flexibility and strength while reducing your chances of injury.Forearm Curls - Rest the back of your forearm on a table or on your leg with your palm facing up, and your hand should be in line with your arm.Place a light dumbbell or weight in that hand, slowly lower the weight toward the floor and then curl it up and toward your body.Hold briefly and then repeat and alternate forearms.Flexion and Extension - Flexing and extending your wrists and forearms is an excellent way to increase the range of motion of your wrists.Rest your arm on a table top beside your chair and allow your hand to hang over the end of the table. Bend your wrist down toward the floor until you feel the muscles and tendons begin to stretch and hold the position for 5 seconds and then raise your hand straight up toward the ceiling until you feel the stretch and hold this position for 5 seconds.Keep your fingers close together during this exercise.Repeat this exercise with the opposite hand. Once this movement becomes simple, add a light weight or dumbbell and repeat with this resistance.Side Flexion - You can easily increase the side-to-side range of motion by rotating your wrists left and right. Sit straight in a chair and allow your arm to hang over the arm of the chair or rest your forearm on a table with your hand and wrist hanging off the side.Turn your hand at the wrist to the left until you feel the muscles pulling slightly and hold the position for 5 seconds and then turn your wrist to the right and hold it for 5 seconds.Gradually increase the range of motion and time you hold the exercise position as your flexibility increases. Alternate arms and repeat.Again, add a light weight or dumbbell or hold one end of a resistance band and repeat with this resistance.Finger Exercises - If you do a lot of typing, data entry or gaming you may often experience sore, stiff and tired fingers. To strengthen your fingers and improve their endurance, perform simple finger exercises anytime your fingers begin to feel tired or tighten up.Sit in your chair and hold your hands straight out in front of you without locking your elbows. Open your hand and spread your fingers as far apart as possible for at least 5 seconds. Next, close your fingers into a tight fist and hold for 5 seconds.Hammer Exercises - This is considered a radial strengthening exercise as the movement involves bending your wrist toward your thumb side.Using a hammer or a small weight plate on ONE end of a dumbbell bar, tilt the hammer or dumbbell toward the ceiling and then slowly lower it.Repeat and then alternate hands.More wrist exercises for gamers by Dr Levi Harrison:When treating wrist, forearm and finger pain, see a clinician or physician if you experience numbness in one or both of your hands, a weak or unequal grip, tingling or signs of carpal tunnel.By using wrist stretches and wrist exercises as a gamer or computer worker you have a good chance of avoiding carpal tunnel injury and surgery.Treat your condition early to prevent complications and permanent nerve damage. When exercising for wrist and forearm relief, identifying the cause is a good place to start.

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