



## ***ASL for Arthritis***

Adding hand strengthening exercises is important in an older adult's physical fitness regimen. Without strong hands, doing simple activities like lifting a toothbrush or eating and drinking can become difficult and weigh heavily on a person's confidence and autonomy. An interesting way to not only exercise all of the muscles and joints in the hands and wrists, but also learn a new language is to practice the alphabet in American Sign Language (ASL)!

The shapes and movements a person practicing ASL performs provides an array of opportunities to move the fingers, hands and wrists in ways someone not using ASL may not normally have. Get together a group of individuals interested in learning ASL as a part of their social and physical fitness regimen. Watch videos on YouTube of people practicing the alphabet and hand out a printed ASL alphabet (see the backside of this sheet). Work together as a group to practice the shapes of the letters.

Once participants start to become familiar with the letters, make a game out of it! Have a "spelling bee" and ask participants to spell different words. Doing ASL in different sequences will further help to train the muscles in the hand to work in new ways.

Here is [link](#) to a video showing how to recite the alphabet in ASL.

