

Hand-held Dynamometer/ Grip Strength

What's the purpose?

A hand-held dynamometer measures how strong your hand and forearm muscles are. Your therapist will ask you to squeeze the device as hard as you can. It records how much force you produce. This information helps your therapist understand your muscle strength and track changes over time, especially during rehabilitation. Hand-held dynamometers are often used with older adults or people recovering from a stroke or living with joint conditions or movement disorders. By measuring strength over time, therapists can see whether treatments and exercises are helping improve muscle strength.



What do I have to do?

Your therapist will give you a small device with a handle and a dial to measure how hard you can squeeze. You will sit in a chair with your feet on the floor. You will bend your elbow, and hold your forearm out parallel to the ground. While keeping your arm unsupported, you'll squeeze the handle as hard as you can for 3–5 seconds. After a short rest, you'll repeat this 2 more times. Your final score will be the average of the 3 squeezes.

What does my score mean?

The hand-held dynamometer typically measures grip strength in kilograms (kg) or pounds (lbs) of force. Grip strength varies by sex, age and condition and whether you are using your dominant or non-dominant hand. Grip strength peaks in early adulthood and gradually declines with aging.

On average, healthy adult men can grip with about 100–120 pounds of force, while healthy adult women average about 60–70 pounds. Grip strength naturally decreases with age.

Grip strength below 60 pounds for men or 35 pounds for women may indicate weakness, frailty, or low muscle mass. Measuring grip strength helps therapists understand your overall strength and guide exercises to keep you safe and independent.

Have a conversation with your therapist about what the results mean for you.

To see a full summary of this instrument and more, visit sralab.org/rehabilitation-measures.
Questions? Email rehabmeasures@sralab.org or call 312.238.2802

