

# Early Active Motion following your Thumb Flexor Tendon Repair

**This leaflet explains how to protect your tendon repair and the exercises which will optimise your potential recovery after flexor pollicis longus (FPL) surgery. This sets a foundation for recovery and for a return to your usual activities of daily living.**

## What is early active motion?

Early active motion is a set of exercises around bending and straightening the affected thumb following your tendon repair.

Moving and exercising your thumb is essential to prevent stiffness and to encourage the repaired tendon(s) to glide again after surgery.

Movement has also been shown to promote better tendon healing.

It is also very important not to over-exercise your thumb, as this may damage the tendon repair. Therefore **please ensure that you only exercise as instructed by your therapist.**

Following your therapist's instructions will help you to get as much movement in your thumb back as possible, over time.

## Looking after my splint

A thermoplastic splint (supporting device) has been made for you to help protect your repaired tendon(s).

You must wear your splint **at all times** (even when sleeping) for four weeks after your operation. Do not remove the splint without the advice of your therapist.

You **must not** get the splint hot or wet, try to alter it in any way, or take it off for any reason (including when sleeping and bathing) as this can increase the risk of damaging the repair.

You must wear the splint full time until \_\_\_\_\_.

## Looking after my wound

Your wound will be left with minimal or no dressings to aid healing.

If your stitches need to be removed, this can be done either by a nurse at your GP surgery or in the Hand Unit, 10 –14 days after surgery. If you are unsure, please confirm with your therapist.

To prevent infection, you must keep your wound clean and dry until it is healed.

## Will I be in pain?

You may have some mild pain after surgery and during your exercises, which is a normal part of the recovery. Please take any pain killers you have been given as prescribed by a doctor.

## Will I need to do any specific exercises?

Whilst in the splint, rest the little finger side of your hand on a flat surface. Undo the strap over your thumb to complete the following exercises:



1. With your thumb blocking splint on, gently push the tip joint of the thumb into a bend with your unaffected hand. Slowly straighten the tip joint using the muscles in your thumb.



2. Remove the thumb blocking splint. Use your unaffected hand to gently push your middle joint into a bend. Slowly straighten the thumb using the muscles in your thumb.



3. Using your thumb blocking splint, gently use your muscles to bend the tip joint of your thumb. Slowly straighten the tip joint using the muscles in your thumb.



4. Remove the thumb blocking splint. Gently bring your thumb into a bend using both joints. Slowly straighten your thumb to touch your splint.

## How often should I do my exercises?

Please complete each exercise \_\_\_\_\_ times and hold for \_\_\_\_\_ seconds each time.

Repeat \_\_\_\_\_ times per day.

## Additional instructions

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## What else should I do and not do?

- **DO NOT** push your thumb out straight using your other hand, as this can damage your tendon repairs.
- **DO NOT** use your thumb for anything other than your exercises.
- **DO NOT** drive, until instructed to do so by your therapist or doctor.

## Contact us

If you have any questions about your recovery, please feel free to discuss them with your therapist at your next appointment.

For more urgent queries the team can be contacted on the **treatment enquiries** phone number listed below.

Your therapist's name is \_\_\_\_\_

**Treatment enquiries:** 020 8725 1038 (answer phone only)

**Appointments:** 020 8725 3000

**For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit [www.stgeorges.nhs.uk](http://www.stgeorges.nhs.uk)**

## Additional services

### Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS can offer you on-the-spot advice and information when you have comments or concerns about our services or the care you have received. You can visit the PALS office between 9.30am and 4.30pm, Monday to Friday in the main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough wings (near the lift foyer).

**Tel:** 020 8725 2453 **Email:** [pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk)

## **NHS Choices**

NHS Choices provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make decisions about your health.

**Web:** [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

## **NHS 111**

You can call 111 when you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency. NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones.

**Tel:** 111

## **AccessAble**

You can download accessibility guides for all of our services by searching 'St George's Hospital' on the AccessAble website ([www.accessable.co.uk](http://www.accessable.co.uk)). The guides are designed to ensure everyone – including those with accessibility needs – can access our hospital and community sites with confidence.



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