

# Early Active Motion following Thumb Extensor Tendon Repair

This leaflet explains how to protect your tendon repair and the exercises which will optimise your potential recovery after extensor pollicis longus (EPL) surgery. This sets a foundation for recovery and for returning 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 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).

It is important that you 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 your 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

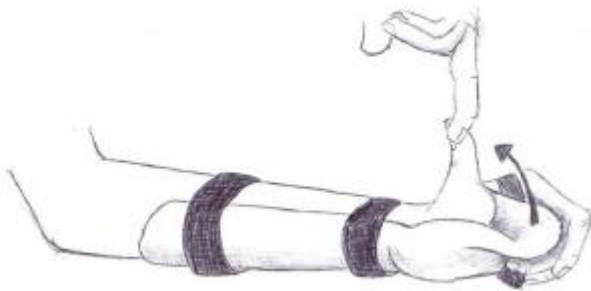
Your wound will be left with minimal or no dressings to aid healing.

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.

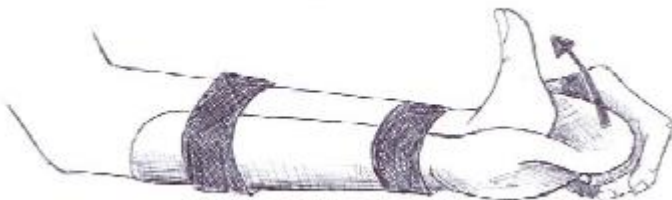
## Will I be in pain?

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

## Your exercises



1) Undo the strap across your thumb **only**. Using your unaffected hand, lift the thumb of your affected hand away from the splint, keeping it straight when you lift. Then slowly lower your thumb back down to the splint.



2) Using the muscles of your affected thumb, lift your thumb straight back and away from the splint. Then slowly lower your thumb back down to the splint.

3) Undo the straps across your hand and thumb. Then, using your unaffected hand, pull your wrist and the lower part of your thumb back away from the splint as far as possible.



While in this position, wrap the index finger of your unaffected hand around the base of your affected thumb. Using the muscles of your affected hand, gently bend the tip of your thumb down as far as you can.



Next, using the muscles of your affected hand, straighten up the tip of your thumb as far as you can.

Finally, lower your thumb and wrist slowly back to the 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?

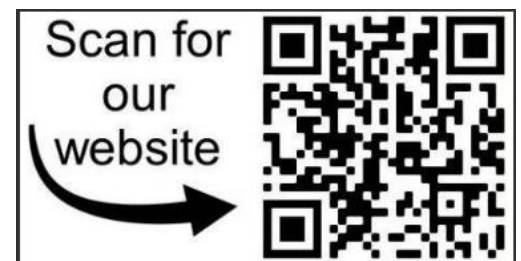
- **DO NOT** push your thumb into a bend as this can damage your tendon repair.
- **DO NOT** use your thumb for anything other than your exercises.
- **DO NOT** drive.

## Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about early active motion following your thumb extensor tendon repair, please feel free to discuss them with your therapist at your next appointment.

For more urgent queries please contact treatment enquiries on 020 8725 1038 (answer phone only, please leave a message and someone will get back to you as soon as possible). For appointment enquiries, please contact 020 8725 0007.

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



**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.



**Reference:** THE\_EAMT\_03 **Published:** June 2022 **Review date:** June 2024