

# Rehabilitation after a Thumb Extensor Tendon Repair

## Information for patients four weeks after surgery

**This leaflet explains about returning to your everyday activities four weeks after your thumb extensor pollicis longus (EPL) tendon repair. If you have any further questions, please speak to a doctor, nurse or therapist caring for you.**

### How is my tendon healing?

It is now four weeks after your tendon repair. Your tendon is now strong enough for controlled, light use, but can still be damaged if over-used.

### When should I wear my splint?

A thermoplastic splint was made for you to help keep your thumb in a safe position after surgery.

Now you should wear the splint only at night and for protection (e.g. on public transport and in busy places like shops) for another two weeks.

### How should I look after my scar?

It is important to continue to massage the scar to prevent it from sticking to underlying structures and from making movement difficult.

Massage the scar using a water-based cream (e.g. E45, Nivea or Diprobase) in a deep, circular motion for at least 30 minutes a day. You can break this down into smaller chunks of time throughout the day if you need to, e.g. 10 minutes in the morning, 10 minutes at lunchtime and 10 minutes before bed.

### Will I be in pain?

Any pain after your operation should settle down over the first few months. Massaging your scar can be painful at times but please carry on as it will really help you to get the best result.

### How should I be using my hand day-to-day?

You should now begin to use your hand for light, clean activities. If you are lifting objects, they should weigh no more than one kilogram (two pounds).

Try to use your hand as normally as possible in day-to-day activities such as typing, writing, eating a meal or dressing (including zips, buttons and shoelaces). Make sure you are using all the fingers and not avoiding or favouring one finger.

## Will I need to do any specific exercises?

Your therapist will advise you on specific exercises to help regain movement and use of the thumb. Please ensure you only exercise and use your hand as your therapist has told you.

## What else should I do and not do?

- **DO NOT** push your thumb or wrist into a bend with your other hand as this can damage your tendon repair.
- **DO NOT** drive for another four weeks.

## Additional instructions

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## Will I have a follow-up appointment?

You will continue to have regular appointments under the care of the hand therapy team as needed.

## Contact us

If you have any questions about recovery after surgical repair of your thumb extensor tendon, 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 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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