

# Rehabilitation after an APL / EPB Tendon Repair

## Information for patients four weeks after surgery

**This leaflet explains more about returning to your everyday activities four weeks after your thumb extensor 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 it 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.

You should now only wear the splint 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 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 out of your splint. 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). Try to change which fingers you use, e.g., using your thumb and index finger for the first activity, then your thumb and middle finger for the second activity and so on.

## 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 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 regarding the information provided in this leaflet, 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 0007



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)

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## Additional services

### Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS can offer you advice and information when you have comments or concerns about our services or care. You can contact the PALS team on the advisory telephone line Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday from 2pm to 5pm.

A Walk-in service is available:

Monday, Tuesday and Thursday between 10am and 4pm

Friday between 10am and 2pm.

Please contact PALS in advance to check if there are any changes to opening times.

The Walk-in and Advisory telephone services are closed on Wednesdays.

PALS is based within the hospital in the ground floor main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough Wing.

**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.

