

Hand Therapy following Thumb Extensor Tendon Repair

Instructions for early active movement after surgery

This leaflet is for patients who have had an extensor tendon repair their thumb under the care of St George's Hospital. It explains what you can do to ensure the best possible recovery. If you have any further questions, please speak to the therapist caring for you.

What is early active movement?

The tendon that you have had repaired enables you to straighten your thumb. Early active movement allows you to exercise your thumb in a protective splint after repair. Exercising your thumb is important for preventing stiffness and encouraging the tendon to glide after surgery, however it is also very important that you do not over exercise the thumb as this may damage the tendon repair.

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 **all the time** (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 to 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?



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.



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



Using your unaffected hand, gently support your wrist in an extended position. Gently bend the tip joint of your thumb down in the splint and then bring your thumb back to a straight position in 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

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** use your thumb for anything other than your exercises. You can use your fingers for light activities up to 1 kg.
- **DO NOT** drive until advised 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** telephone number listed below.

Your therapist's name is _____

Treatment enquiries: 020 8725 1038

Appointments: 020 8725 0007

Or scan
here



For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.stgeorges.nhs.uk

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.

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

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

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

Tel: 020 8725 2453 **Email:** pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk

NHS UK

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

Web: 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). The guides are designed to ensure everyone – including those with accessibility needs – can access our hospital and community sites with confidence.



Reference: THE_TET1-4_03 Published: March 2025 Review date: March 2027
