

Hand Therapy after Thumb Flexor Tendon Repair

Instructions for early active movement after surgery

This leaflet is for patients who have had a flexor tendon repair to their thumb and who are 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 bend 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 **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 to 14 days after surgery. If you are unsure, please confirm with your therapist.

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

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

Appointments: 020 8725 0007

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

Was this information helpful? Yes / No

Please let us know, contact patient.information@stgeorges.nhs.uk and include the leaflet title.

Thank you.

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.



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