

Finger extensor tendon repair

part 1 – early phase

Introduction

You have undergone surgery to repair tendons that straighten your finger(s). It will take approximately 12 weeks for your tendons to be strong enough to return to normal function.

Splint

For the first five weeks the tendon repair is very delicate and can be easily undone. To protect the repair you will be provided with a splint. This splint stops you making a fist which could cause the tendon to re-rupture. You should wear the splint 24 hours a day. Do not use the hand to do any functional tasks as this could also cause the tendon to rupture. You should also avoid hanging or carrying anything from the splint/arm.

You should not drive with your splint on or remove your splint to do so. Driving either with or without your splint puts you at significant risk of rupturing your tendon(s). To drive with your splint on also puts yourself, any passengers and other motorists at risk as you will not have adequate control of the vehicle. You should not drive until at least 8 weeks after your tendon repair. If your splint is uncomfortable speak to your therapist who can remould or alter your splint. The splint is made out of thermoplastic material which softens when hot so do not expose it to any form of heat.

Wound

Keep your dressing dry and clean at all times. If the dressing gets wet or if you are concerned about your wound contact your GP. Once your stitches are removed and your wound is fully healed you should start massaging the scar with water-based moisturiser, for example, E45. This is an important part of your treatment as it will help prevent the scar tissue sticking to the tendon and limiting movement of the finger.

Swelling

To minimise swelling keep your hand above heart-level and raised as much as possible. Please avoid letting it dangle in the "dependent" position by your side while you are standing / walking, or in your lap while sitting down.

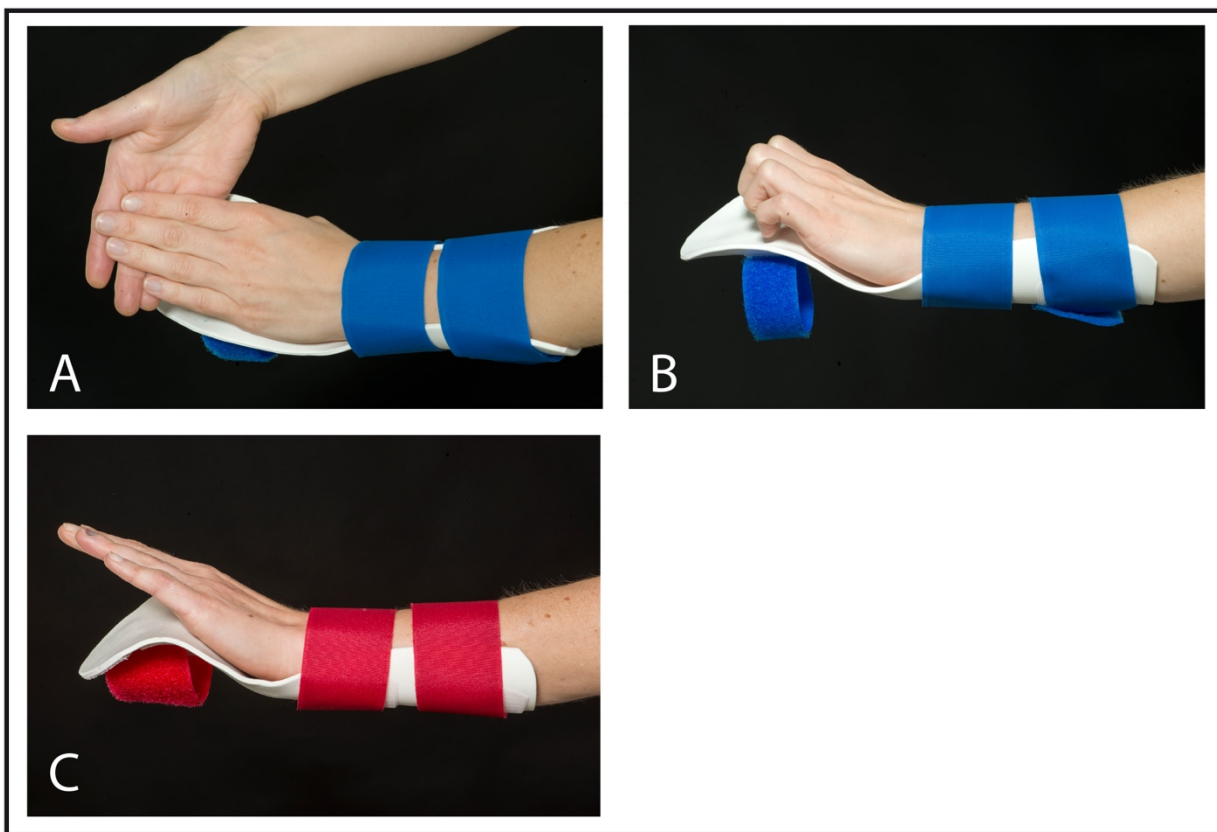
Exercises

Gentle movement of the tendon also helps to limit scar tissue sticking to the tendon and will begin to gently strengthen the tendon. You should complete only the exercises advised and at the frequency advised. Doing too many exercises may cause inflammation and the formation of extra scar tissue. Doing too few may lead to stiffness.

PATIENT INFORMATION LEAFLET

Remove the finger strap and complete the following exercises every hour.....repetitions of each:

- A. Using your other hand straighten all fingers back fully from the splint.
- B. Gently bend the top two finger joints as far as possible.
- C. Gently lift all your fingers from the splint.



part 2 – later phase

Introduction

By six weeks your tendon repair has gained sufficient strength to progress into a different stage of treatment. The repaired tendon however takes 12 weeks to regain the strength of an undamaged tendon. You will therefore still need to follow some precautions.

PATIENT INFORMATION LEAFLET

Splint

You will no longer need to wear your splint. Additional splints may be provided to help regain movement. Your therapist will discuss this with you and provide any splint as appropriate.

Exercises

You are now allowed to move the fingers and wrist actively through their full range of movement. However you should not try to stretch the fingers into full flexion or the wrist fully forward until seven weeks after the surgery. Continue to complete the exercises you were given after surgery. Your therapist will advise you on additional exercises as appropriate to your individual need.

Scar

You should continue to massage your scar and apply any silicone gel or elastomer already provided, as the scar tissue remains active. You may also be given ultrasound treatment if the scar continues to restrict movement of the tendon.

Function

You can begin to use your hand for light, functional tasks for example fastening buttons or lifting a full cup. At seven weeks you can increase the use of your hand and resume driving. You should however avoid lifting anything very heavy or gripping very tightly until 12 weeks when the tendon should be at full strength. Your therapist will offer any further advice or treatment to help you return to maximum function after your surgery.



PATIENT INFORMATION LEAFLET

Further information

For further information on your procedure please contact:

- the Day Surgery Unit on 024 7696 6861 or 024 7696 6868
- the Day Surgery Unit St Cross Hospital Rugby on 01788 663264

The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format please contact 024 7696 6861 and we will do our best to meet your needs.

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