

Rehabilitation following finger flexor tendon repair

early phase

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

Splint:

- The tendon repair is very delicate and can easily be damaged. To protect the repair you will be provided with a splint.
- You should wear the splint 24 hours a day for first five to six weeks.
- Do not use the hand to do any functional tasks. If you do not follow the advice, your repaired tendon may rupture.
- You should also avoid hanging/carrying anything from the splint/arm. If your splint becomes 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 the Physiotherapy Department on the number on your appointment card. Once your stitches are removed and your wound is fully healed you should start massaging the scar with water based moisturiser (e.g.E45, aqueous cream). 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 raised as much as possible, with support if needed.

Exercises

Gentle movement of the tendon also helps limit scar tissue sticking to the tendon. You should complete only the exercises advised by your therapist. Doing too many exercises may cause inflammation and the formation of extra scar tissue. Doing too few may lead to stiffness. Here are three examples of exercises you may be asked to perform:

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1. Bend your operated finger in to your palm with the help of your other hand.



2. Gently curl your fingers into your palm



3. Straighten fingers up to the splint



later phase

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 be strong enough to function normally. You will therefore still need to follow some precautions.

Splints

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 and wrist fully back until eight weeks after the surgery. Continue to complete the exercises you were given after surgery. Your therapist will advise you on additional exercises according 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 eight 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 is strong enough to withstand this.

Your therapist will offer any further advice or treatment to help you return to maximum function after your surgery.



PATIENT INFORMATION LEAFLET

Further information

If you experience any sudden loss of bend please contact your therapist as soon as possible.

Please speak to your therapist regarding any information in this leaflet or contact us:

- **Telephone: 024 7696 6013** for physiotherapy at *University Hospitals Coventry and Warwickshire*
- **Telephone 01788 663257** for physiotherapy at *St Cross Hospital Rugby*

For further information contact the number on your appointment card:

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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