

## Upper Limb Unit: Hand Therapy

# Thumb Extensor Tendons (Early Stage)

### Introduction

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

### Splint

For the first 5 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 bending your thumb fully which could cause the tendon to re-rupture. **You should wear the splint 24 hours a day** and not use the hand to do any heavy functional tasks, as this could 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 as 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.



## Patient Information

Once your stitches are removed and your wound is fully healed you should start massaging the scar with a water based moisturiser, for example, E45, Aqueous cream. This is an important part of your treatment, as it will help prevent the scar tissue sticking to the tendon. This could result in the limited movement of the thumb.

### Swelling

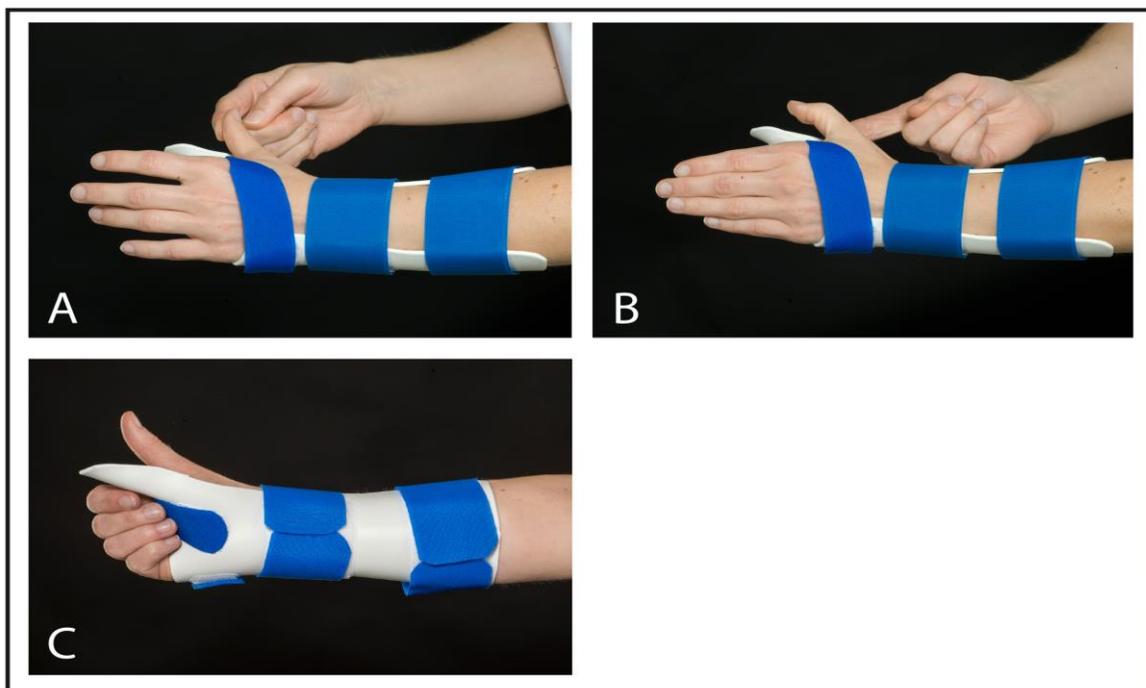
To minimise swelling keep your hand raised as much as possible.

### 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 cause stiffness and adhesions.

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

- A. Using your other hand straighten the thumb back from the splint.
- B. Holding the second thumb joint straight gently bend and straighten the top joint of the thumb.
- C. Gently straighten the thumb away from the splint.



## Patient Information

If you need any further information please contact the Occupational Therapy department – Tel: 024 7696 6016

The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format please contact us on 024 7696 6016 and we will do our best to meet your needs.

The Trust operates a smoke free policy.

### **Document History**

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