

## Patient Information



# Upper Limb Unit: Hand Therapy

## MCP Joint Replacement: Pre-operative information

### Introduction

Surgery to replace the knuckle joints of your hand involves removing the existing damaged joints and replacing these with a silicone implant or 'spacer'. At the same time tendons in the fingers may also be repositioned to help prevent the fingers 'drifting' in the direction of the little finger (ulnar drift).

During the first few weeks after surgery new tissue begins to grow around the artificial joint to form a joint capsule. It is important to keep the joint moving during this time to ensure maximum movement is gained after surgery. Splints must also be worn to keep the joints in a safe position and protect the tendons.

### Therapy

After surgery you will need to attend the hand therapy unit at the University Hospital in Coventry. Your treatment will be undertaken by either an Occupational Therapist or Physiotherapist. You will need to attend treatment for a minimum of twice a week for the first six weeks. After this time treatment will be continued at a frequency appropriate to your progress. Your therapist will advise on this.

Your initial appointments will be arranged one to two weeks before your surgery (if you don't receive any appointments please contact Fiona Kidd on the number given at the end of this information). Your first appointment will be within three or four days of your operation. At this appointment your dressings will be removed and lighter dressings applied. A resting splint will be made and you will be advised on exercises to complete. You will then attend several days after this to have a second splint made and to continue your therapy.

### Splints

You will be provided with two splints. One must be worn **at all times** for the first five to



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six weeks after surgery. One splint should be worn to rest the hand in overnight. The second splint should be worn during the day. The second splint is more complex in nature and allows some movement of your fingers. You will be advised on exercises to do whilst wearing this splint.

You may be provided with additional splints after six weeks according to your individual needs. Your therapist will recommend these as appropriate.

### **Exercise**

It is essential that exercises are completed regularly at home to regain maximum movement of the joints after surgery. You will need to allow time for your exercises to be completed approximately every two hours throughout the day to help gain optimum results from your surgery.

### **Wound care**

Your wounds will be reviewed and redressed each time you attend the hand therapy unit. Stitches will be removed between 10 and 14 days after surgery, according to how quickly the wounds heal.

### **Function**

- You should avoid using the hand except for very light daily tasks for the first six weeks after surgery.
- You may then gradually increase use of the hand under guidance of your therapist up to 12 weeks. At this time sufficient healing will have occurred and it will be safe to use the hand in any task.
- Driving should be avoided until you can make a tight fist without pain.

It is important to consider any additional support you might require after your operation in terms of day to day activities as use of the hand against advice risks damage to the new joints. As a consequence of having more restricted use of your operated hand you are likely to need to use your un-operated hand more than usual in day to day tasks. Pump dispensers for shampoo, soap, etc will make maintaining hygiene easier. Your therapist can advise further on techniques to simplify daily tasks.

### **Further information**

Should you have any further questions/concerns or wish to discuss any aspects of your post-operative care in more detail please contact Fiona Kidd, Occupational Therapist, on 024 7696 6016.

For further information please visit our hand service web site

<http://tinyurl.com/uhcwhand>

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

The Trust operates a smoke free policy.

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## Document History

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