

Patient Information

Hand Therapy

Flexor Tendon Repair/Graft (Short Splint)



You have undergone surgery to repair the tendons that bend your finger. It will take around 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 the first five to six weeks.
- 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.
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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 a water based moisturiser such as 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.

Driving:

You should not drive with your splint on or remove your splint to do so. Driving 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.

Swelling:

To minimise swelling keep your hand raised as much as possible, with support if needed.

Protecting your tendon

Do Not

- Use the injured finger for anything other than the exercises you have been given.
- Try and straighten your finger using your other hand or with any force
- Remove your splint unless you are instructed to do so by the therapist.
- Drive your car or ride a bike until instructed by your therapist
- Hang your hand down by your side for a prolonged period as this may cause it to swell.

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Exercises:

Gentle movement of the tendon helps to limit scar tissue sticking to the tendon and will help to gently strengthen the tendon. You should complete only the exercises advised and at the frequency advised by your therapist. Doing too many exercises may cause inflammation and the formation of extra scar tissue and may lead to the repair not being as strong. Doing too few may lead to stiffness and excessive scar tissue.

The following exercises should be completed hourly for the first five weeks.



1. Using your good hand bend your injured finger(s) down as far as possible. Repeat this exercise until the finger(s) bend easily. You may push the finger tips to touch the palm without harming the repair. Repeat this exercise for the other fingers.

2. With the wrist held forwards, straighten all the fingers to touch the back of the splint. **Repeat 10 times.**

3. With the wrist held backwards gently bend all the fingers together from the tips. **Repeat 10 times.**

You must **never** force the fingers to make a full fist. It may take a few weeks to be able to bend the fingers fully

4. With the wrist held backwards place the uninjured hand in the middle of the palm and gently scratch the back of the fingers. **Repeat 10 times.**

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5 - 6 weeks

At five weeks your therapist will advise you on slowly weaning out of the splint. You will normally be instructed to continue wearing the splint at night or in vulnerable situations up until six weeks.

By six weeks your tendon repair has gained sufficient strength to discard all splinting. The repaired tendon however takes 12 weeks to be strong enough to return to full function. You will therefore still need to follow some precautions.

Your therapist at this stage may make you a different splint that will help you regain movement.

You are now allowed to move your fingers and wrist actively through their full range of movement. However, you should not try and stretch the fingers and wrist fully back until eight weeks after the surgery.

Your therapist will advise you on any additional exercises you may need to start doing,

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.

Further Information

If you need further information please contact your Therapy Department:
University Hospital, Coventry and Warwickshire: Tel 024 7696 6016
Rugby, St Cross Hospital: Tel 01788 663257

For further information please visit our hand service web site
<http://tinyurl.com/uhcwband>

For further information contact the number on your appointment card.

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The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format please contact 024 7696 6012 and we will do our best to meet your needs.

The Trust operates a smoke free policy.

To give feedback on this leaflet please email feedback@uhcw.nhs.uk

Document History

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