

## Patient Information



## Orthopaedic Department

# PIP Joint Replacement

### Introduction

A PIP finger joint replacement is an operation which involves removing the ends of a damaged joint and replacing them with an artificial joint or spacer.

### Why might I need surgery?

People often present with a painful, misshapen finger joint and experience a decreased range of movement. The articular cartilage on the ends of the bone wears away, and the exposed bones rub against each other, causing pain. A replacement joint can be successful in reducing this pain.

### After surgery

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.

There are few functional limitations as a consequence of replacing the PIP joint, but it is important to note that the range of movement will be less than that of a normal joint.

### What are the possible complications?

Complications can include:

- Swelling and stiffness of the fingers
- Delayed wound healing
- Infection – this can be treated with antibiotics
- Loosening / rotation of the joint

### Therapy

After surgery you will need to attend the hand therapy unit at University Hospital, Coventry. Your treatment will be undertaken by either an Occupational Therapist or



## Patient Information

Physiotherapist. You will need to come for treatment regularly for the first 6 to 8 weeks. After this time treatment will be continued at a frequency appropriate to your progress. Your therapist will advise you on this. It may be possible to transfer your care to The Hospital of St Cross Rugby if you live in this area but the initial sessions will be at the University Hospital, Coventry.

### **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, depending how quickly the wounds heal.

After your stitches have been removed and the wounds are fully healed, you should massage your scars daily with a non-perfumed moisturising cream; your therapist will show you how to remove your splint to do this. This will help to soften the scars and prevent any adhesions between the scar tissue and surrounding structures which may limit movement.

### **Splints**

You will be provided with a splint to be worn all of the time for the first 5 to 6 weeks after surgery. This protects the soft tissues as they heal.

### **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 2 hours throughout the day to help gain optimum results from your surgery.

### **Function**

You should avoid using the hand except for very light daily tasks for the first 6 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.

### **How long will I be off work?**

You can expect to return to work within several weeks of surgery depending upon the nature of your job and whether or not the surgery is to your dominant hand. If you can remain in your splint and perform light duties you may be able to return to work sooner. Jobs involving heavy work may require you to remain off work for a couple of months.

### **When can I drive?**

You will not be able to drive during the first few weeks after the operation. Driving should be avoided until you can make a tight fist without pain.

Further information sheets will be available to you when you leave the hospital:

- Post Operative Hand and Arm instructions
- Care following a general anaesthetic

## Patient Information

Should you have any further questions or concerns or should you wish to discuss any aspects of your post-operative care in more detail please contact Gnaeri Hodkinson, Occupational Therapist on 024 76 966016.

In the event of you experiencing any problems after your surgery contact your GP or the Day surgery Unit.

For further information on your procedure please contact The Day Surgery Unit on 024 7696 6861 or 024 7696 6868.

### 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/uhcwhand>

The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format please contact 024 7696 5469 and we will do our best to meet your needs.

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