

Care of your Extensor Tendon Repair

Introduction

You have injured the tendon(s) that straightens your finger or thumb. This has been repaired but you must take care of it. The repair will not be strong for 3 months. While it is weak it needs to be protected in a splint.

Wearing your splint

- The splint is fitted to prevent you bending your fingers or thumb too far, so that the repaired tendon is protected.
- Your splint should not be removed unless instructed, that includes showering or bathing. A plastic bag can be positioned over the hand to keep it dry.
- If you have to change to a different splint at night, the therapist will show you how to keep your fingers supported straight at all times.
- If the splint comes into contact with any form of heat e.g. hot water, sitting in front of the fire/radiator, it will become soft and lose its shape.

Activities and working

Your therapist will advise you about when you can return to work – it will depend on the type of job you do. You may be off work for 3 months if you use your hand for heavy manual work. You will not be able to drive for 9-10 weeks following your surgery

Do's and don'ts

- ✓ **Do** your exercises every hour through the day
- ✓ **Do** keep your hand elevated at all times to reduce swelling
- ✓ **Do** keep your unsplinted joints moving to prevent them becoming stiff
- ✗ **Don't** take your splint off until advised to by your therapist
- ✗ **Don't** pull your fingers or thumb up against the straps / bandage
- ✗ **Don't** use your injured hand at all until advised to by your therapist
- ✗ **Don't** drive your car or ride a bike
- ✗ **Don't** hang your hand down by your side as this will cause it to swell
- ✗ **Don't** attempt to clean your hand
- ✗ **Don't** try and bend your injured finger(s) or thumb unless you have been instructed to do so by your therapist

Exercises

You may need to do some exercises every waking hour to stop your hand getting stiff and sore. If so the therapist will give you an exercise sheet.

Only do the exercises that you have been shown.

If there is a sudden decrease in your finger or thumb movement, or the splint is causing any discomfort or is damaged, contact your therapist.

Contact numbers

Hand Therapy Team

01392 402429

Therapist:

If you have any problems over a weekend or after 5pm Monday – Friday, you will need to contact Otter Ward on **01392 402807** or attend the Emergency Department.

From 4 weeks after your operation

Your tendon(s) should now be starting to get a bit stronger and it is safe to do some gentle exercises out of the splint (as instructed by the therapist). Remember the tendon(s) will not be strong for 3 months. You will still need to wear your splint for protection in between your exercises and at night for another 2 weeks.

After 6 weeks

You can usually start to use your hand for **very light activities only**. Do not lift anything heavier than a cup of tea for the next couple of weeks. Also avoid strong gripping.

After 8 weeks

You can start to use your hand for heavier activities but avoid full resistance until 10 weeks and contact sports until 12 weeks.

If you are unsure of anything ask your therapist.

The Trust cannot accept any responsibility for the accuracy of the information given if the leaflet is not used by RD&E staff undertaking procedures at the RD&E hospitals.

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