

Flexor Tendon Repair (thumb), a guide to your therapy

Information and advice for
patients and carers



This leaflet is designed to help you understand your injury, the importance of a splint and the exercises you need to do to make sure your thumb gets better

What is a flexor tendon?

It is a long thin structure which attaches the muscle in your arm to your thumb and allows it to bend. The tendon in your thumb is called the Flexor Pollicis Longus. You have had surgery to repair this tendon.

When does my therapy (occupational therapy and physiotherapy) start?

You will meet your Therapist 3 to 5 days after your operation, you will be given a splint to wear and some exercises to do.



What is a Splint, and why do I need to wear it?

The splint is used to protect your hand while the tendon is healing and reduces the risk of the repaired tendon(s) snapping. It is usually made of plastic which is shaped to fit your hand. If your splint causes any rubbing, redness or pain contact your therapist immediately.

DO	DON'T
<p>Do wear the splint all the time for 6 weeks. (This will give the tendons time to heal)</p>	<p>Don't remove the splint</p>
<p>Do your exercises that your therapist has taught you</p>	<p>Don't use your hand for any other activities at all (this may damage the tendon repair and you may need another operation)</p>
<p>Do cover the splint with a bag when in the shower or bath</p>	<p>Don't get the splint wet</p>
<p>Do keep away from direct heat sources (this can melt the splint)</p>	<p>Don't drive for 8 to 10 weeks after your operation</p>
<p>Do elevate your hand above your chest (rest it up on pillows when asleep or sitting down)</p>	<p>Don't let your arm dangle at your side</p>
<p>Do move your elbow and shoulder often (or they will get stiff)</p>	<p>Don't play any contact sports for 12 weeks or lift anything heavy (this may damage the tendon)</p>

How often will I have to attend hospital?

Every week for the first 6 weeks at the Leeds General Infirmary on ward L46. Following this your therapist will tell you about any more appointments you need and will arrange this for you.

How long will my tendon take to heal?

Your repaired tendon will take 12 weeks until it is fully healed.

When can I return to work?

This will depend on your type of job and its physical requirements. Your therapist can advise you on this.

What is scar massage and why do I need to do it?

Scar massage helps the scar to heal better. You will be told by your therapist when you can start to massage and you will be taught how to do it - you will need to massage your scar 3 to 4 times daily with a non-perfumed cream.

Home exercise programme - Your exercises explained

You should do these exercises every waking hour.

Exercises 0 to 4 weeks



Passive flexion (whole thumb)

Use your other hand to bend the whole of your thumb downwards in towards your palm. Hold this position for 5 seconds and then slowly straighten your thumb back to the splint using your injured hand only

Repeat 5 times



Passive flexion (tip of thumb)

Use your other hand to bend just the tip of your thumb downwards. Hold this position for 5 seconds and then slowly straighten your thumb back to the splint using your injured hand only.

Repeat 5 times



Flex to 25% (whole of thumb)

Move the thumb across your palm from the bottom knuckle and then bend the tip downwards. Hold for 5 seconds and then slowly straighten to the splint.

Repeat 5 times

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Flex to 25% (tip of thumb)

Bend the tip of your thumb downwards to 25% of the amount your other thumb can bend. Hold for 5 seconds and then slowly straighten to the splint.

Repeat 5 times.

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Blocked extension

Use your other hand to bend your injured thumb at the knuckle joint. Keep it in this position and then straighten the tip of your thumb.

Repeat 5 times.

What should I do if I am concerned about my tendon repair?

If you feel a pop or a snap or you stop being able to bend your thumb you should wear your splint and you must ring the department immediately. If this happens outside of our normal working hours then you should attend Accident and Emergency/ minor injuries. If you feel unwell or are worried that your wound is infected then you must also contact Accident and Emergency.

It is important that you do not straighten your thumb with force as your tendon is not strong enough to withstand this pressure



Therapy Department Contact Details

Telephone (0113) 392 2720 Monday-Friday 8am - 3.45pm

The Hand Unit - L46, D floor Clarendon Wing

Leeds General Infirmary

For any problems out of these hours, contact your local Accident & Emergency Department. If you cannot make an appointment, please ring in advance to allow another to be rearranged. Missing appointments can harm your recovery.

What did you think of your care? Visit bit.ly/nhsleedsfft
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