

Thumb Extensor Tendon Repair / Transfer

Hand Therapy Patient Information

You have had a tendon/s repaired/transferred in your thumb. The repair is **very weak** and gets weaker for the first 4 weeks post operation. Therefore, a splint has been made to protect it and to prevent you from using your hand.

You **must** wear the splint **all the time**.

You will be taught special exercises to complete **hourly**. These are to help keep the tendon moving without damaging it, and to help stop it from becoming 'stuck' down.

Rehabilitation (0-3 weeks)

- When at rest, keep your hand elevated to help reduce swelling.
- Only remove your splint to do your exercises as shown below, or for careful hand washing with your thumb supported.
- Whilst wearing the splint you should regularly check your skin condition and ensure the splint is fitting comfortably. If you have an issue, contact your physiotherapist.
- **Do not** get the splint wet or place it on anything hot. In the shower wear a plastic bag over your hand, seal around the forearm.
- **Do not** use your hand for anything other than the exercises shown to you in this booklet.
- **Do not** smoke. This can affect the speed at which your tendon heals.
- **Do** keep up your exercises every hour.
- Once your stitches have been removed (roughly 10-14 days post-op) or have begun to dissolve (absorbable), you can begin scar massage. Your Physiotherapist will guide you on how to do this.



Exercises

1. Take your splint off. Support your wrist so it is tilted backwards (in extension). Holding your thumb back gently bend and straighten the tip of your thumb. Do not force it. Repeat 10 times.



2. Place your hand flat on the table. Using your other hand, slowly pull your thumb out to the side. Then actively bring your thumb in to touch the side of your index finger. Repeat this 10 times.



Your therapist will teach you how to gently massage your scar using hand cream (only if your stitches have been removed). Do this for 5 minutes every 2 hours.



Rehabilitation (3-5 weeks)

- Continue to wear your splint **all of the time**, except for the following exercises.
- Complete all of your previous exercises (0-3 Weeks) before these exercises.
- Massage your scar regularly.

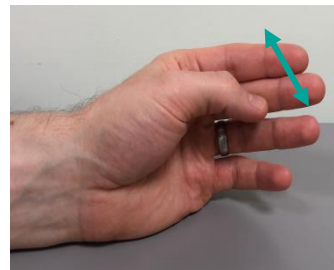
Exercises

1. With your hand flat on the table, use your other hand to pull your thumb out to the side. Now slowly let go and keep your thumb there. Count to 5. Then slowly slide the thumb back towards the index finger. Repeat this 5 times.



Hold for 5 seconds

2. Rest your hand on a table, with your wrist backwards, in the position shown below. Slowly bend your thumb halfway down to your palm (towards the middle finger). **Do not** take it past your middle finger. Then relax. Repeat 10 times.



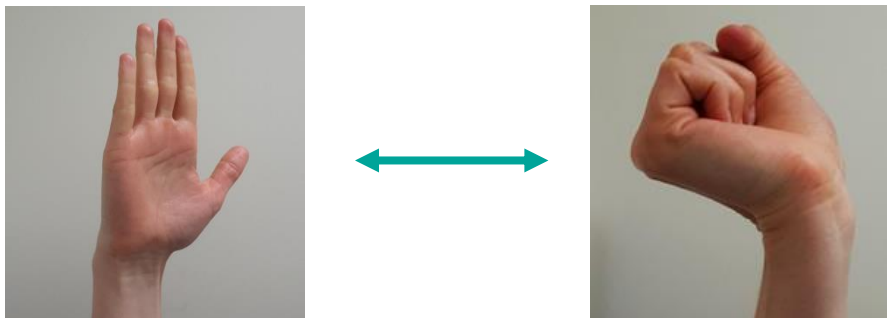


Rehabilitation (5-6 weeks)

- Your tendon is getting stronger every week
- It is still important to keep up all your other exercises every hour and continue wearing your splint.
- Keep massaging your scar regularly.
- You cannot drive yet.

Exercises

1. Bend your wrist backwards and gradually try to make a fist, **wrapping your thumb over your fingers (do not force this)** Repeat 10 times every hour. Increase this gradually over the next couple of weeks so that you can make a full fist by 6 weeks.



2. Start some light strengthening work e.g. scrunching up paper or squeezing a sponge. Do not force this movement. Repeat up to 15 times.



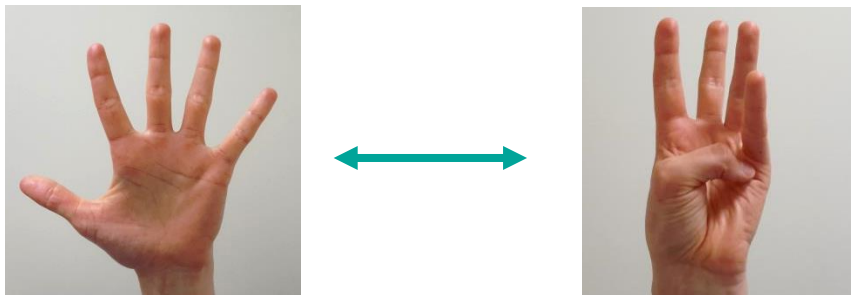


Rehabilitation (6-7 Weeks)

- Your tendon is getting a little stronger
- It is still important to keep up all your other exercises and scar massage.
- Wear your splint at night and during daily activities (e.g. light housework) from 6 weeks post-operation.
- **Do not** play contact sports.
- Use your hand for light activities **only**.
- **Do not** lift anything heavier than a kettle.

Exercises

1. Try and take your thumb across to touch the base of your little finger. Then straighten out your thumb. Repeat 10 times.



Continue to increase the strength in your hand by beginning to do light activities at home/work.



Rehabilitation (7+ weeks)

8 weeks

You can consider **driving** (if you have good movement and grip power) but remember it is **your** responsibility to safely do so.

10 weeks

Your tendon is getting stronger. But be aware, your hand and arm will be weak due to lack of use. Your therapist can teach you strengthening exercises.

You can return to **manual work**. Discuss this with your therapist.

12 weeks

Check with your therapist before returning to **heavy manual work**, contact sports or sports that require prolonged periods of holding e.g. climbing. It is also **very important** to discuss any problems or concerns you have with your therapist.

**If you have any problems in the future, please contact your physiotherapist.
Contact details are below.**

Hand Therapy

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Please contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) if you require this leaflet in a different format, or would like to feedback your experience of the hospital.

Email ruh-tr.pals@nhs.net or telephone 01225 825656 / 826319.