

# Trapeziectomy

## Hand therapy patient information

### What is a trapeziectomy?

A trapeziectomy is an operation to remove a small bone at the base of your thumb, called the trapezium. This is usually done to relieve pain from osteoarthritis in the thumb.

### What will happen after the operation?

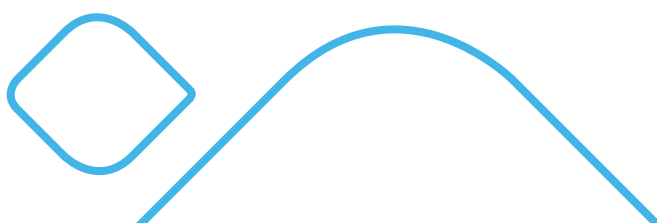
- You will be put in dressings and/or a cast for around two weeks.
- You will then be brought back to clinic to have the plaster and any pins removed.
- You will be seen by the physiotherapist in clinic and a splint will be provided for you to wear until approximately eight weeks after your operation.

### Rehabilitation (weeks 2-4)

- Wear your splint full-time.
- Only remove your splint for scar massage.
- **Do not start any exercise until week 4.**

### Scar massage

Once your wound/pin sites are dry and healed, you can start scar massage. Initially, get used to touching the scar. Then begin to apply pressure, whilst moving in a circular movement over the scar, ensuring some movement of the skin. You may add a small amount of moisturising cream to rub across and around the scar to keep the skin moving freely. Do this for 3-5 mins, four times a day.



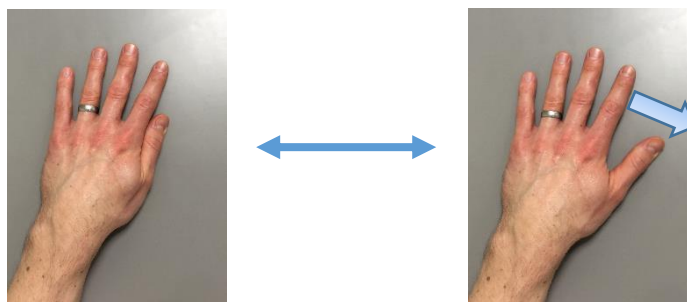
## Rehabilitation (weeks 4-8)

- Start gentle exercises (below) as instructed by your therapist.
- Discomfort with exercises and stretches is okay, but try to avoid pain.
- Try to avoid tight gripping, pinching or lifting anything with your operated hand.
- Return to light activities whilst wearing your splint (washing up, using cutlery, etc.)

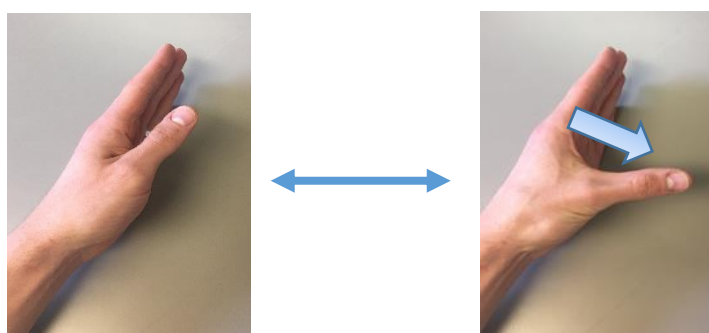
## Exercises

**Aim to do these every two hours. Remove your splint to complete your exercises.**

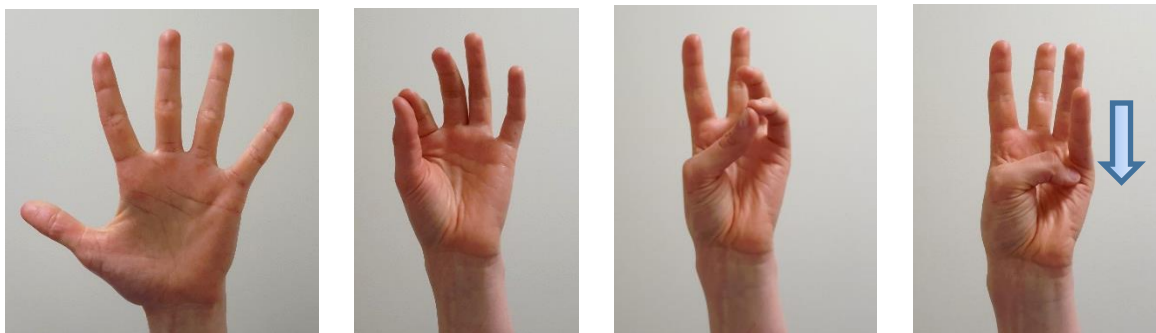
1. Place hand palm down on the table. Slowly move your thumb out to the side, away from your index finger and then back in. Repeat ten times.



2. Rest the side of your hand on a flat surface. Start with your thumb level with your index finger. Slowly move your thumb sideways (away from the index finger), creating an 'L' shape and then back in. Repeat ten times.



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3. Slowly move your thumb to touch the tip of each finger, starting with your index finger and working across to the little finger. Then, if able, slide your thumb down the little finger, before spanning your hand to restart. Repeat ten times.



4. With your palm facing up and the fingers relaxed, gently make a circular movement with your thumb. Repeat ten times in one direction and ten times in the opposite direction.



### Rehabilitation (weeks 8-12)

With guidance from your therapist you can...

- Slowly wean off your splint. You may still need the splint for extra support with heavier activities of daily living.
- Increase your use of your thumb/hand for daily activities.
- Return to driving, if you have achieved a comfortable grip.

## Rehabilitation (week 12+)

- You can now start the strengthening exercises shown below.
- These exercises should be done two or three times **a week**, with rest days in between.
- Do not push into pain.

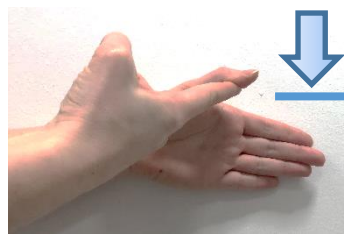
### Stage 1 Strengthening exercises (Static)

1. Place a finger from your other hand on each side of your thumb (as shown in the images below). Gently push against it, trying to keep your thumb as rigid as possible. Hold for five to ten seconds.

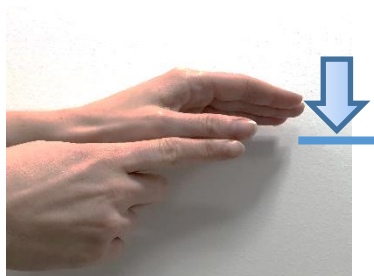
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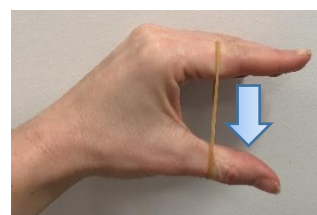
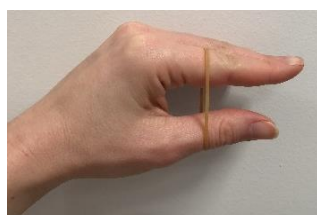
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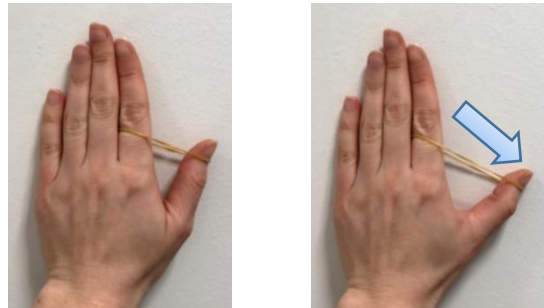
### Stage 2 Strengthening exercises (Dynamic)

You can move on to stage 2 once you can do the exercises in stage 1 easily.

1. Place an elastic band around your thumb and index finger. Move your thumb away from your index finger. Hold for up to two seconds.



2. Place an elastic band around your thumb and index finger. Keep your hand flat on the table. Move your thumb away from your index finger, stretching the elastic band. Hold for up to two seconds.



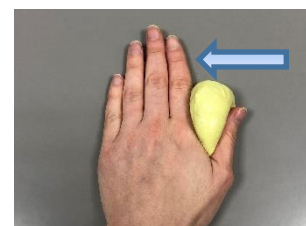
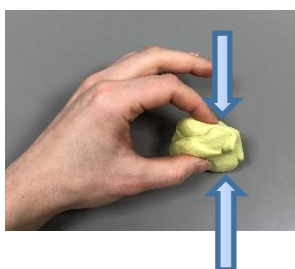
3. Place the elastic band around the thumb and pull it out to the side. Then, slowly pull your thumb in towards your hand, stretching the band. Hold for 1-2 seconds then slowly relax to the starting position.



## Therapy Putty Exercises

Once you have regained movement and basic strength, you can increase the resistance of your exercises by using Therapy Putty. You may wish to discuss this with your therapist.

Some examples are below.



### Rehab tips for your hand and wrist

- **Warm water exercises** - Once all wounds or pin sites have healed, submerge the affected hand/arm in warm water for 5 minutes and practice the exercises you have been taught.
- **Massage** - Rub into the affected area for 3-5mins, every 2-3 hours. If your wounds are healed, you can use moisturising cream. Massage will help decrease swelling, improve movement, soften scars and de-sensitise the area affected. Your therapist can guide you.
- If you have any open wounds or pin sites, monitor for signs of infection (redness, hot, swollen, burning pain, discharge from wound or feeling feverish). If you have any of these signs then visit your GP or A&E.

**If you have any problems, please contact your therapist. Contact details are below.**

#### Hand Therapy

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Royal United Hospitals Bath NHS Foundation Trust  
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Email [ruh-tr.psct@nhs.net](mailto:ruh-tr.psct@nhs.net) or telephone 01225 825656.