

# Dupuytren's Contracture

## Hand Therapy Patient Information

### What is Dupuytren's Contracture?

Dupuytren's is an abnormal thickening of the fascia (a layer of tissue under the skin) in the palm of the hand and the fingers. The thickened area may develop into nodules or cords that extend towards the fingers. The cause of Dupuytren's is still unknown, but it usually runs in the family and is more common in males.

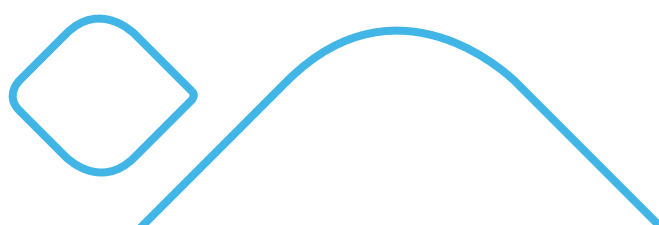


### What are the symptoms?

- The fingers may be pulled forwards and can be difficult to fully straighten
- An inability to fully flatten your hand on a flat surface
- One or more small lumps (nodules) and/or cords in the palm and/or fingers
- Pits/grooves in the palm

### How is it treated?

Non-surgical management may be recommended if the condition is not affecting your ability to perform daily activities. This may include massage, exercise or injections. If these interventions fail to resolve the problem, surgical options may be recommended.



### Surgical Management

The main operations that your surgeon will discuss are;

1. Fasciotomy – Release of the Dupuytren's cord
2. Fasciectomy – Removal of the diseased fascia
3. Dermofasciectomy with full-thickness skin graft – Diseased fascia and affected skin are removed and replaced with a skin graft from elsewhere on the body (usually around the elbow)

Unfortunately, there is a chance the Dupuytren's contracture can return after the procedure. The recurrence rate depends on the patient's age, the severity of the contracture and the type of procedure.

### Post-operation Management

The dressings and/or cast applied after your surgery are normally removed around 10-14 days after the operation. If you were given a sling, you can wear this for comfort over the first two weeks but you **do not** need to wear this full-time. You will be referred to see a Hand Therapist to help you recover your movement and function, as well as manage the scar and any pain you may experience. The hand usually takes approximately 3 months to heal and return to full function.

- If you notice any redness, heat, painful burning sensations in the wound area or you are experiencing flu-like symptoms, contact your GP as soon as possible to check for infection.
- Pain and swelling are normal after surgery. Take the dosage of pain relief prescribed by your pharmacist or ask your therapist for advice on pain control.
- You **must not** perform any heavy lifting or excessive gripping with your operated hand for up to 8 weeks after your surgery.
- You **should not** exercise into pain. (Discomfort that settles after exercise is normal).
- You will be taught the exercises in this leaflet to help regain movement and strength.
- If you have undergone a **dermo-fasciectomy** operation, **do not** force the joints into the extremes of movement. You should also avoid dangling your hand for the first two weeks after your surgery. Your therapist will discuss this with you in more detail, if it is applicable.
- You may be issued with a splint to help keep your fingers straight. You should wear this at night and for short periods during the day (30-60 minutes). Your therapist will advise you further.

## Rehabilitation (Weeks 0-4)

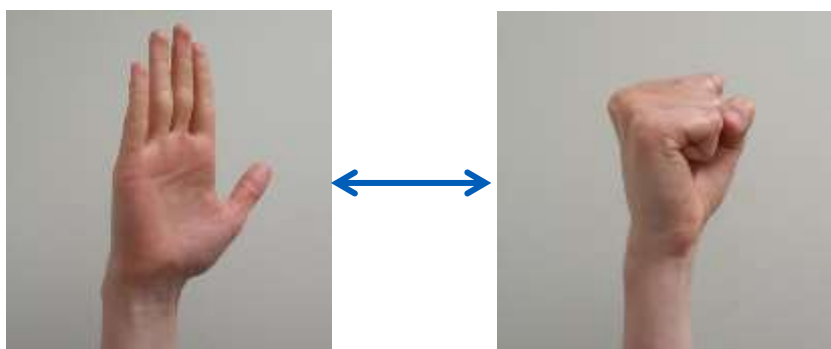
- Keep your arm **elevated** to help reduce swelling.
- Your therapist may show you sweeping massage to help reduce the swelling.
- Once your stitches have dissolved or been removed (around 10-14 days post-operation), your therapist will teach you scar massage, to help the scar and skin move freely.
- If you have had a dermo-fasciectomy, your therapist will advise you on when to start exercise numbers 2 and 3. This is normally around 3-4 weeks after surgery.

## Exercises

**Aim to complete these exercises every 1-2 hours.**

- These exercises aim to improve the movement in your hand.
- Perform scar massage by applying firm pressure to the scar and moving in small circles for 1-2 minutes.

1. Bend and straighten your fingers 20 times.



2. To help with bending the fingers, using your hand push the fingers into a fist, putting pressure across the nails and over the back of the fingers. Hold for 3-5 minutes.



3. To help straighten the fingers, place your hand on a flat surface. Press down onto the back of the hand with your other hand, until you feel a stretch. This may be uncomfortable, but you should be able to tolerate it for 3-5 minutes.



## Rehabilitation (6-8+ Weeks)

### Strengthening Exercises

**Aim to complete 10-20 repetitions, 3-4 times per day**

- You should work on these exercises until your hand starts to feel tired.
- To strengthen your grip, fill a bowl with dry rice and begin grasping the rice, working it through your hand so it drops out the side of your hand. Alternatively, you can grasp a sponge or wring out a flannel. This works better when submerged in water, as you can squeeze the water out of the sponge or flannel.



- You can strengthen using therapy putty, which can be bought online, to perform pinching (**A**), pushing down with your thumb (**B**) or squeezing with your fingers (**C**). You should work on these exercises until your hand starts to feel tired. This may take 30 seconds.

**A**



**B**



**C**



## 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

Brownsword Therapies Centre (Dept F1)  
Royal United Hospitals Bath NHS Foundation Trust  
Combe Park, Bath, BA1 3NG  
01225 821241 | [www.ruh.nhs.uk](http://www.ruh.nhs.uk)

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](mailto:ruh-tr.pals@nhs.net) or telephone 01225 825656.