

## Hand therapy department

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# Thumb extensor tendon repairs: early active movement regime

The tendon that bends your thumb has been repaired. It will take at least eight weeks for the tendon to heal and at least twelve weeks before you can return to unlimited activities of your arm and hand. You will need advice on when to begin specific activities again.

This leaflet describes some exercises you should do regularly each day to help your thumb to heal. It also tells you what you should and should not do. If you need further information or advice, please do not hesitate to contact your hand therapist.

### Exercises



Complete these exercises \_\_\_\_\_ times every hour.

#### Definitions:

**Actively** = moving a finger joint by yourself without help from your other/unaffected hand.

**Passively** = using your other/unaffected hand to move a joint.

1. **Passively** straighten your thumb from the splint.
2. **Actively** lift your thumb up from the splint.
3. Lift your whole hand up from the splint, support the base of your thumb and **actively** bend the thumb tip, then straighten.
4. Lift your whole hand up from the splint, support the base of your thumb and **actively** bend the lower joint of your thumb, then straighten.
5. Bend all your fingers into a fist, and then straighten.

### Do

- ✓ Keep your arm/hand in the air to minimise swelling.
- ✓ Lift your arm above your head regularly to maintain shoulder movement.
- ✓ Bend and straighten your elbow regularly to maintain movement.
- ✓ Keep your splint on at all times for the next six weeks.
- ✓ Return to the hospital straight away if your splint breaks or moves so that it is no longer protecting your hand.
- ✓ Return to the hospital straight away if you are suddenly unable to **actively** straighten your thumb.

## Do not

- ✗ Use your injured hand.
- ✗ Remove your splint; it is there to protect your thumb.
- ✗ Push your thumb backwards with your other hand - **no passive bending**.
- ✗ Drive.

**Note: it is important to follow these instructions so as not to risk damaging the repaired tendon(s).**

## Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about the advice given on removal of your splint after thumb flexor tendon repairs, please contact the **hand therapy department** on **020 7188 4172** or **020 7188 4174**, Monday to Friday 8am to 5pm

## Useful sources of information

**Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)** – To make comments or raise concerns about the Trust's services, please contact PALS. Ask a member of staff to direct you to the PALS office or: **t: 020 7188 8801** at St Thomas' **t: 020 7188 8803** at Guy's **e: [pals@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@gstt.nhs.uk)**

**Knowledge & Information Centre (KIC)** – For more information about health conditions, support groups and local services, or to search the internet and send emails, please visit the KIC on the Ground Floor, North Wing, St Thomas' Hospital.  
**t: 020 7188 3416**

**Language support services** – If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch using the following contact details.  
**t: 020 7188 8815 fax: 020 7188 5953**

**NHS Direct** – Offers health information and advice from specially trained nurses over the phone 24 hours a day.  
**t: 0845 4647 w: [www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk](http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk)**

**NHS Choices** – Provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make choices about your health.  
**w: [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)**

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Membership is free and it is completely up to you how much you get involved. To become a member of our Foundation Trust, you need to be 18 years of age or over, live in Lambeth, Southwark, Lewisham, Wandsworth or Westminster or have been a patient at either hospital in the last five years.

To join, please call 0848 143 4017, email [members@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:members@gstt.nhs.uk) or visit [www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk](http://www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk)

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