

Hand therapy department

Thumb flexor tendon repairs – early active movement regime

The tendon that bends your thumb has been repaired. It will take at least twelve weeks for the tendon to heal and at least 16 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 sheet 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 call your hand therapist using the number on the back page.

With any surgery, there is a small risk that the wound may become infected. Signs to look out for include increased pain, heat or redness around the wound. If you are concerned about any of these symptoms, seek advice from your therapist or GP.

Exercises



Complete these exercises _____. Repeat each exercise _____ times.

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** bend your thumb towards the base of your little finger using your other hand.
2. **Actively** bend the tip of your thumb, then the whole thumb towards the base of your little finger.
3. **Actively** straighten your thumb backwards so that the tip just touches the splint. Do not use your other hand to push back your thumb.
4. With your other hand, support behind your thumb holding the knuckle bent and **actively** straighten the tip of your thumb (making sure the top joint is straight).
5. **Actively** bend and straighten your fingers.

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 all unaffected joints regularly to maintain movement.
- ✓ Keep your splint on at all times for the next six weeks.
- ✓ Contact your hand therapist straight away if your splint breaks or moves so that it is no longer protecting your hand.
- ✓ Contact your hand therapist straight away if you are suddenly unable to **actively** bend your thumb.

Do not

- ✗ Use your injured hand.
- ✗ Remove your splint; it is there to protect your thumb.
- ✗ Push your thumb back towards your splint with the other hand – **no passive straightening of the thumb.**
- ✗ Drive.

Note: If you do not follow this advice, you 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

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

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