Thumb flexor tendon repairs – early active movement regime

The tendon that bends your thumb has been repaired. It will take at least 12 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 contact your hand therapist.

With any surgery, there is a small risk that the wound may become infected. Signs to look out for include increased pain and heat and/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, please contact the Hand therapy department.
- **t:** 020 7188 4172 or 020 7188 4174, Monday to Friday, 8am to 5pm
- **e:** handtherapyappointments@gstt.nhs.uk

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit **w:** www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets

**Pharmacy Medicines Helpline**
If you have any questions or concerns about your medicines, please speak to the staff caring for you or call our helpline. **t:** 020 7188 8748, Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm

**Your comments and concerns**
For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). To make a complaint, contact the complaints department.
- **t:** 020 7188 8801 (PALS)  
- **e:** pals@gstt.nhs.uk
- **t:** 020 7188 3514 (complaints)  
- **e:** complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk

**Language and accessible support services**
If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch. **t:** 020 7188 8815  
- **e:** languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk

**NHS 111**
Offers medical help and advice from fully trained advisers supported by experienced nurses and paramedics. Available over the phone 24 hours a day. **t:** 111

**NHS website**
Online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you take control of your health and wellbeing. **w:** www.nhs.uk