



REHABILITATION

# Total Elbow Replacement

## *You have had surgery to replace your elbow.*

It is important that you now work on regular exercises in order to regain the best function in your elbow and hand.

The following is an outline of a set of exercises that you may find helpful during your recovery.

Remember the effort you put into your rehabilitation will significantly affect your final function.

## *Week 0-2 after surgery*

You will have a bandage applied in theatre which includes a plaster backslab to keep the elbow out straight and protect the healing wound.

### *Finger Exercises*

Straighten and bend the fingers, holding each position for a count of 5.

### *Wrist Exercises*

Straighten and bend the wrist, holding each position for a count of 5.

Immediately after your operation you can start bending and straightening your fingers, thumb and wrist as your dressings allow. You can use your other hand to increase the range of movement you can achieve. This may feel uncomfortable but try and complete **ten sets of each stretch every hour** if you can.

Keep your arm elevated to reduce the swelling, which is often considerable at this stage as this is a big operation.

Regularly move your shoulder, as much as possible, to keep it mobile. Lift the arm with the other hand if necessary to achieve this.



## *Week 2 - 6 after surgery*

The plaster will be removed and you can start to move the elbow. Introduce light activities such as turning pages, eating, folding light laundry, tying a shoe, buttoning and typing. Do not lift anything heavier than a cup of tea at this stage.

***Work through these exercises 10 times every 2 hours during the day.***

### *Elbow Flexion*

Bend your elbow up and hold for a count of 5 then relax. Do not force the movement with your other hand as you could tear the healing tendon at the back of your elbow.



### *Elbow Extension*

Straighten the elbow until you feel a tightness. To increase the stretch gently hold a light weight in your hand whilst supporting under the elbow. Let the elbow relax at the front and stretch out slowly. Allow this stretch to occur over a minute then relax.

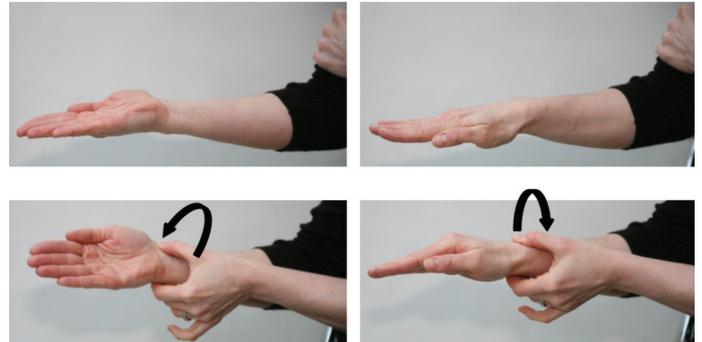




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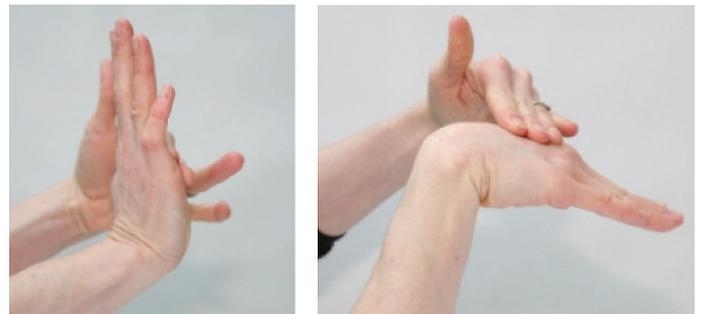
#### *Pronation and Supination*

Keep your elbow tucked into your side. Rotate your forearm so the palm of your hand faces upwards and then downwards in turn. If this is stiff use your other hand to apply a gentle stretch in each direction, holding the stretch for the count of 5 in each direction.



#### *Wrist Flexion/Extension*

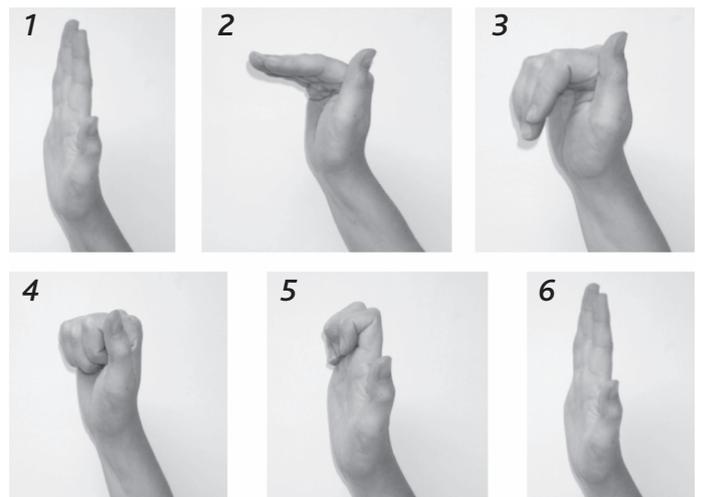
Bend and straighten the wrist until you feel a stretch in each direction. Hold the stretch at each extreme for a count of 5. Do not force the movement in either direction.



#### *Tendon Gliding*

Complete as a sequence, as numbered.

Increase the stretch in each position using the other hand if you feel stiff.





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#### Neck and Shoulder Exercises

Raise your arm over your head when in a lying position.

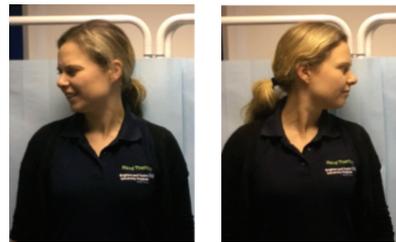
You should also keep your shoulder moving regularly to avoid stiffness.



Shrug your shoulders up and down in front of a mirror.



Keep your neck moving by turning your head over each shoulder.



#### Scar Massage

Once the wound has fully healed scar massage may help to soften the scar tissue. Apply deep circular massage with firm pressure 4-5 times daily for 5 minutes to the scar and surrounding area. You may use a non-scented moisturiser to help with this.

#### Week 6-12 after surgery

Gradually build up the strength in your wrist and hand, returning to day to day activities as comfort allows.

Bear in mind that it is recommended that you never lift more than five pounds (12.5kg) of weight with this arm to reduce the chance of the replacement loosening in the bone. This is two bags of sugar.

Do not engage in contact sports, such as rugby or weightbear with your elbow in an extended position, for example during yoga and pilates.

You can return to driving at week 6, if you feel confident and in control of the car.

Continue your exercises aiming to increase the movement by using your other hand to apply a gentle stretch.

A light weight in the hand will help stretch the elbow out straight.

