



REHABILITATION

## Extensor zone III & IV

(Central slip injuries, no open wound or surgery)

*One of the tendons that straighten your finger has been injured.*

It will take at least 6 weeks for your tendon to heal and at least 12 weeks until it is strong enough for you to return to unlimited activities.

Progress from this injury varies from person to person and you must be guided by your therapist. These pages provide a guide for an average rehabilitation regime.

### Week 0 - 4 after injury

You will have a gutter splint (see picture) made to fit you by your hand therapist.

This protects the healing tendon of your finger. Pay close attention to how the splint is applied, attention to detail makes all the difference to the final results.



*Splint 1 - The Gutter Splint*

*You need to wear this first splint continuously for the first four weeks after your injury, when you are not doing your exercises. Change into splint number 2 to do your exercises, as below.*

### *Exercising the end joint of the finger*

Carefully remove splint 1 and place splint 2 on the front of your injured finger, as shown. Be sure you place the splint so that you can see the skin crease of the end joint.

Now hold down the middle joint with your uninjured hand while actively trying to bend the top joint of the injured finger. Then straighten the end joint.



*Splint 2*

*Repeat 10 times every 2 hours in the day.*

### Week 4 - 8 after injury

Continue with splint 1 when you are not doing your exercises, as before. Add in a third splint to progress your recovery (see picture). You should now be doing exercises in splint 2 and splint 3 regularly.

### *Exercising both finger joints*

Carefully remove splint 2, Place splint 3 on the front of the injured finger, at its base, as shown. Secure the strap and hold the splint, the strap and the base of the finger with your other hand (not shown in the pictures below). Carefully bend the injured finger to the angle of the splint, aiming to lightly touch the splint with your finger tip. Then straighten the finger, as shown.

This splint will be altered by your therapist between weeks 6 and 8 to allow more movement of the finger as time goes on.



*Splint 3*

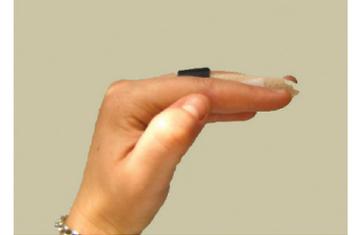
*Repeat with splint 2 then splint 3, 10 times every 2 hours in the day.*



## REHABILITATION

### *Exercising the base joint of the finger*

Carefully remove splint 3 and put splint 1 back on. Now aim to keep your fingers straight yet bend at the base so as to make a 'table top', as shown.



*Complete each of these exercises 10 times every 2 hours in the day.*

### *Week 8 - 12 after injury*

Your tendon has now healed enough to cope with normal daily activities but your hand will feel weak.

During these four weeks of your rehabilitation you will continue to work on regaining a full range of motion, if you have not achieved this yet. You will also start on gradually strengthening your hand and tendon.

Most people can return to unlimited activities at the end of this three weeks.

During this stage individual variations in progress may become more apparent and your hand therapist will tailor your exercise regime to your specific requirements.

### **DO'S**

- Be patient, the effort you put into your rehabilitation is significantly related to the end result obtained from your repaired tendon
- Do keep your arm/hand elevated to minimise swelling, particularly soon after your injury
- Do wear your splints as prescribed
- Do follow the therapist recommendations
- Do keep all your uninjured joints moving, including your shoulder and elbow

### **DON'TS**

- Don't leave your hand out of the splints
- Don't try to push hard against the splints when completing exercises
- Don't use your injured hand to grip objects
- Don't drive until you have discussed this with your therapist