



REHABILITATION

Extensor zone III & IV

(Central slip injuries,
treated with 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 - 3 after injury

You will have three splints made for you when you see the hand therapists:

Splint 1 - Gutter Splint

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.

You need to wear this all the time you are not using your exercise splints for the first three weeks after surgery.



Splint 1

Splint 2 - First exercise splint

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

Splint 3 - Second exercise splint

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.



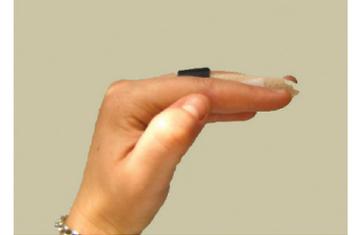
Splint 3



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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 5 times over, 5 times a day

Week 4 - 6 after surgery

During this phase you will increase the frequency and repetitions of exercises

carried out as directed by your progress. Your therapist will help you with this.

In addition splint 3 will be progressively modified to allow more joint movement.

You will still need to wear splint 1 at night until week 6,

Week 6 - 12 after injury

Your tendon has now healed enough to cope with light 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 the twelve 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
- Do massage your scar (once healed) with moisturiser as demonstrated by your therapist

DON'TS

- Don't leave your splint off in the first 4 weeks of your injury.
- Don't try to push hard against the splints when completing exercises
- Don't use your injured finger to grip objects
- Don't drive until you have discussed this with your therapist