



REHABILITATION

# Thumb Base Surgery

*You have had surgery to treat the arthritis at the bottom of your thumb.*

It will take you sometime to regain full function of your thumb. Most people can return to contact sports and heavy activities by 12 weeks after the surgery.

Progress from this surgery varies from person to person and you must be guided by your therapist.

These pages provide a guide for an average rehabilitation regime. Remember the effort you put into your rehabilitation is significantly related to the end result obtained from your operation.

## Week 0 – 4 after surgery

Your thumb will be supported in a bandage with plaster incorporated (backslab from theatre) then a full 'gauntlet' cast during this time (see pictures).

You should keep all the joints that are not within the support as mobile as possible, including your elbow and shoulder. Work particularly on the end joint of the thumb and all your fingers.



*Finger flexion and Thumb extension, in plaster*



*Finger extension and thumb flexion, in plaster*



*Wrist flexion and extension, in plaster*

## Week 5 - 6 after surgery

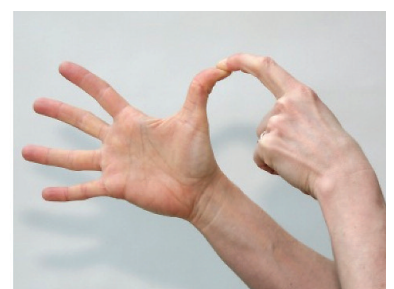
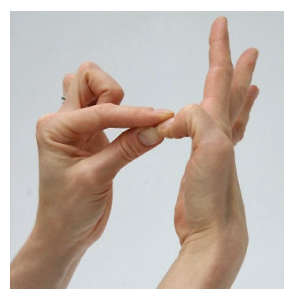
Your plaster will be removed and you will be provided with a splint that you can take on and off. Wear the splint all the time except for exercise sessions and for scar massage.

**Scar massage** – apply deep circular massage with firm pressure 3 times daily for 3 minutes to the scar and surrounding area. You may use a non-scented moisturiser to help with this and to soften the skin.

*You should take your splint off and complete the following set of exercises 5 times each every hour during the day:*

### Tip Flexion/Extension

Move the end of the thumb back and forth. If this is stiff use the other hand to exert a gentle stretch in each direction.



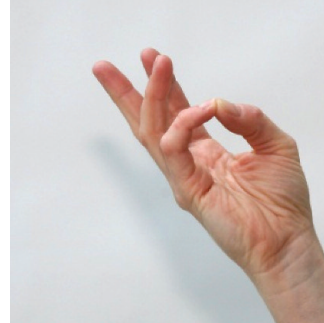


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### *Opposition*

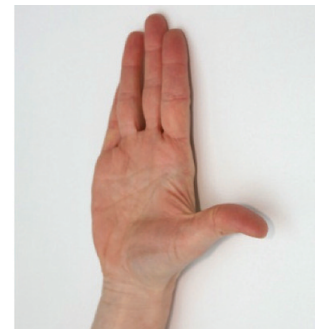
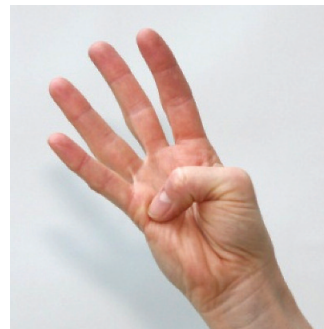
Touch the tip of each finger in turn with the tip of the thumb. Start off with touching the tip of the index finger.

You may find it difficult to reach all the finger tips when you first start this exercise, just exert a gentle stretch, the tissues will become more supple with time.



### *Whole thumb Flexion/Extension*

Move the thumb away from and across the palm. Again just exert a gentle stretch and go as far as you can without pain.



### *Weeks 7-12 after surgery*

You may now begin to remove your splint for light activities during the day as well as for your exercises. Light activities include turning pages, eating, folding light laundry, tying a shoe, buttoning and typing.

During these weeks your therapist will work with you on increasing your range of motion and strengthening exercises. Continue to massage your scar.

You should continue wearing the splint at night and in crowded places until the end of the eighth week following surgery.

Most people can get back to driving by the end of the eighth week but you should not do any contact sports or heavy lifting until the end of the twelfth week after surgery.

### *DO'S*

- Do be very careful when you wash and dry your hand, as instructed by your Hand Therapist.
- Do keep all your uninjured joints moving, including your shoulder and elbow.
- Do massage your scar with moisturiser as demonstrated by your Hand Therapist
- Do contact your therapist immediately if your splint or straps break for it to be mended.

### *DON'TS*

- Don't force your thumb into position whilst doing your exercises
- Don't grip any object tightly or lift anything heavy using your thumb until the end of week twelve.