



REHABILITATION

Thumb Short Extensors (Extensor Pollicis Longus intact)

You have injured the short tendons on the back of your thumb at its base (Extensor Pollicis Brevis and Abductor Pollicis Longus).

These have been repaired but it will take at least 6 weeks for your tendons to heal and at least 12 weeks until they are 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.

Your tendon repair requires splinting ALL the time for the first 4 weeks after your surgery except for exercise sessions.

Week 0 to 4 after surgery

You will have a removable splint made to fit you by your hand therapist when you first see them in clinic. This replaces the plaster splint applied in theatre.

This splint protects the healing tendons of your thumb.



Every hour during the day you should practice these exercises:

Remove the splint and hold the base of the thumb as shown.

Bend the thumb down as shown and hold for 5 seconds.

Straighten the thumb out as shown and hold for 5 seconds.

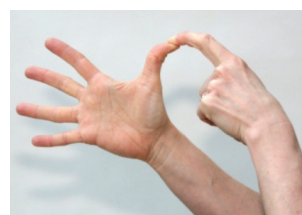
Repeat 4 times



Lift the thumb up with your other hand, as shown.

Take away your other hand and try and hold the thumb up for 20 seconds and then relax.

Repeat 4 times





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Week 5-8 after surgery

You may now begin to remove your splint for periods of exercise and light activities during the day. Light activities include turning pages, eating, folding light laundry, tying a shoe, buttoning and typing. Ask your Hand Therapist when you may begin specific activities if you are in doubt.

Continue to wear the splint at night and if you are out in a busy environment eg the pub.

At least 4 times a day run the thumb through a full set of movements -touch the tips of all the fingers in turn with the end of you thumb and then try and run the thumb down to the base of you little finger. Finish by stretching the thumb up as far as you can.



Week 9-12 after surgery

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

During this last 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 four weeks.

DO NOT DO ANY CONTACT SPORTS (eg rugby) OR HEAVY LIFTING until the end of this period of time, ie until 12 weeks after your surgery.

DO'S

- 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, elbow ,the fingers of your injured hand and the end joint of the thumb.
- Do massage your scar (once healed) with moisturiser as demonstrated by your therapist
- Do contact your therapist immediately if your splint or straps break for it to be mended

DON'TS

- Don't leave your hand out of the splint in the first 4 weeks
- Don't force the thumb across the palm
- Don't drive until you have discussed this with your therapist