



# What is Hand Therapy?

*Hand Therapy is the treatment of hand conditions and injuries using methods such as exercise, splinting and wound care.*

Some hand therapists also undertake diagnosis and treatment of common hand disorders, including injections and requesting and interpretation of x-rays.

Hand Therapy combines a number of therapeutic interventions and the skills of both Occupational Therapists and Physiotherapists. It has evolved from the need for a specialist with the knowledge and experience required to manage the challenging recovery of complex hand and upper extremity injuries.

## **We provide:**

- Specialist advice and education to enable self-management in your own home.
- Advice on improving movement, building strength, and regaining function of the hand and wrist.
- Joint Mobilisations.
- Stretches.
- Active and Resisted exercise.
- Ultrasound.
- Scar Management.
- Retraining and restoration of hand function.
- Splinting.

Hand therapy has a crucial role in the recovery from injury of the hand or wrist, and in the recovery from hand surgical operations.

Hand Therapy is integrated into the hand surgery team.





## REHABILITATION

### *What Can I Do to Get the Best Outcome?*

Your hand will feel stiff and tender to start with, this will improve with time.

You may not be able to drive for a few weeks from the date of your surgery or injury.

Bones and soft tissue can take at least 3 months to fully recover and regain enough strength for heavy lifting and contact sports.

Your hand may not feel normal for up to a year depending on the severity of your injury.

You may need to discuss and negotiate modified work duties with your employer.

### *Have Realistic Expectations:*

Your hand will feel stiff and tender to start with, this will improve with time.

You may not be able to drive for a few weeks from the date of your surgery or injury.

Bones and soft tissue can take at least 3 months to fully recover and regain enough strength for heavy lifting and contact sports.

Your hand may not feel normal for up to a year depending on the severity of your injury.

You may need to discuss and negotiate modified work duties with your employer.

### *Manage Your Swelling:*

Swelling is a normal part of your body's healing response and can persist for up to 6 months, or more, in some cases.

It is extremely important to manage your swelling as it contributes to joint stiffness.

Keep your arm/hand elevated to minimise swelling, Elevate your hand using a pillow at night and for periods during the day instead of wearing a sling for too long, as this will cause shoulder and neck stiffness.

You may find using ice wrapped in a towel over the affected area for short periods of up to 15 minutes may be soothing and beneficial.

### *Normal Movement:*

After a hand injury, or surgery, there may be a reluctance to use your hand in everyday function. However, using your hand and wrist for light, normal daily activities plays an important role in your recovery.

Simple activities such as turning the page of a magazine, wiping a table with a towel, squeezing shower gel bottle, etc can all help.

