

Finger Flexor tendon injury

Relative motion flexion splinting

The injury you have sustained is to the tendons that bend the fingers. You have received very delicate surgery to repair the tendons(s) that bend the fingers.

Although the tendon(s) have been repaired surgically, it will take 2-3 months for the repair to be strong enough to cope with normal use of your hand.

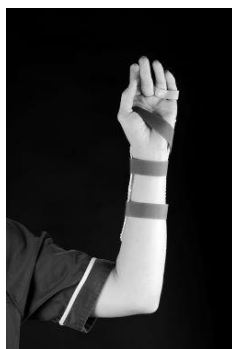
Care of your hand after the operation

Preventing swelling

If you let your hand hang down, it will make any swelling worse. This will make your hand painful and stiff and stop it from working properly. Your hand must be kept above the level of your heart until it is no longer swollen, this may take a few weeks. At night you should rest your hand on pillows.



To stop your hand becoming too swollen and to stop your elbow and shoulder from becoming stiff you will need to do 'pumping exercises' with your whole arm 10-15 times every half an hour. This is done by reaching up towards the ceiling and then back down to shoulder level.



Looking after your wound

To assist with healing and make it easier to do your exercises, your wound will be left with minimal or no dressings. It is important that you keep your wound clean and dry until it is fully healed. You must monitor your wound for signs of infection which include increasing pain and swelling, redness and discharge/fluid which may be foul smelling. If you are concerned that your wound may be infected please contact the Plastic Dressings Clinic on the telephone number provided.

Protecting the repaired tendon from breaking

In order to protect your repaired tendon, custom made splints will be made for you which you must wear at all times until your tendon has healed.

Splints

Splint 1 - Wrist element to be worn continuously from week(s) 1-3, then intermittently at night and for protection from weeks 3-6

Splint 2 - Finger splint to be worn continuously from week(s) 1-5, then at night and for protection from weeks 5-6.



Exercises

As you move your fingers your tendons glide in your hand. After a tendon repair, they will not glide so well. The following exercises will help your tendon(s) to glide as it heals.

Weeks 1 – 3

You must do the following exercises as instructed:

1. Passive Hook with both splints on.

Push the repaired finger into a claw position as shown in the picture, using your other hand. Straighten the fingers all together **without** using the other hand. Repeat this with other fingers. Hold for 2 seconds, repeat 5-10 times, every 1-2 hour(s). **Then maintain a 30 second hook stretch on each finger, repeat twice. Repeat every 1-2 hour(s).**



2. Active IPJ (interphalangeal joint) extension with MCPJ (metacarpophalangeal joint) flexion - take the wrist splint off.

Push down on the back of your finger(s) with your other hand and straighten the middle and tip joints of your finger into a straightened position. Hold for 2 seconds, repeat 5-10 times, every 1-2 hour(s).



3. Active finger flexion - take the wrist splint off.

Starting with your fingertips, **gently** curl the fingers, all together, down towards your palm without using your other hand. You should not try to make a full fist at this stage. Hold for 2 seconds, repeat 5-10 times, every 1-2 hour(s).



Additional advice/exercises

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Activities:

You can use your affected hand for light activities as suggested in the table below. However, you must not use your affected finger(s).

Examples of Light Activities	
Personal Care	• Putting on light clothes with easy fastenings
	• Cleaning teeth (electric toothbrush)
	• Shaving
	• Putting on make up
	• Brushing hair
	• Tying shoelaces
	• Using knife/fork/spoon, but not cutting meat
	• Picking up small glass of water/cup of tea
Work/home care	• Writing/signing name
	• Using computer keyboard/mouse/tablet
	• Light dusting
	• Using a light switch
	• Handling money/card payments
Leisure activities	• Playing cards/board games
	• Reading book/newspaper
	• Computer games

Weeks 3 - 5

Continue the above exercises but you will now stop wearing your wrist splint other than at night and for protection during the day. You must continue to wear your finger splint all the time.

You will be taught exercises by your therapist to improve the movement of your hand and wrist. If you do not do the exercises exactly as instructed, your hand may become stiff, or you may risk damaging the tendon repair.

Optional Additional Exercises (to be prescribed by therapist as required):

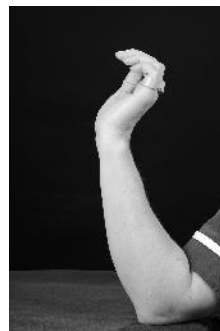
1. Active flat fist:

Gently straighten your fingers to the back of your splint, then keeping your fingertips straight, bend your finger middle joints to allow your tips to reach toward the base of your palm. Do this without using your other hand. Hold for 2 seconds, repeat 5-10 times, every 1-2 hour(s)



2. Tenodesis:

At 3 weeks, once wrist splint can be removed, gently lower your hand and wrist forward, allowing your fingers to straighten as you do. Hold for two seconds at this point. Gently bring your hand and wrist backwards, allowing fingers to curl at the same time. Do this without using your other hand. Hold for 2 seconds, repeat 5-10 times, every 1-2 hour(s).



Weeks 5 - 6

At this stage you can remove both splints for light function but must continue to wear both splints at night and for protection during the day.

You will be instructed on further exercises and activities to improve movement, strength and use of your hand.

At this stage you will be advised by your therapist how much you can use your hand.

Weeks 6 - 8

You can stop wearing your splints

You can return to normal light daily activities after discussing with your therapist.

You will also be advised by your therapist whether you can return to your specific job or sport.

Weeks 8 – 12

At week 8 you can return to driving.

Gradual increase in return to function with heavy function from 12 weeks onwards.

Points to remember

- Keep your hand above your heart all day and night
- Do 'pumping exercises' every half an hour
- Do your exercises as frequently as you have been advised to do
- Do not remove your splint unless you have been advised to do so
- Do not attempt to alter your splint
- Do not get your splint wet
- Do not use your injured hand for anything unless you have been advised to
- Do not drive until you have been told you can

How regularly will I have to attend for hand therapy?

Initially, for the first four weeks you will have to attend hand therapy every week. Thereafter, it will be decided by your hand therapist depending on your progress.

Contact numbers

Hand therapy: 01722 345530 (08:00 – 17:00 Monday to Friday)

Hospital switchboard: 01722 336262

Plastic Dressing Clinic nurses: ext 3254 (08:00 – 17:00 Monday to Friday)

Odstock ward: ext 3507/3139 (out of the above hours)

Your GP or NHS 111 is another source of assistance out of hours.