

Advice and exercises following MCP joint replacement

Patient information

Clinical and diagnostic services centre -
Hand Therapy

What is an MCP joint replacement?

The MCP joints are the large knuckles at the base of your fingers, often referred to as 'back knuckles'. These joints enable us to position our fingers correctly during tasks as well as allowing for strong gripping and pinching. We use our hands in this way throughout the day so these joints can wear down and become painful. Some conditions, such as rheumatoid arthritis, can also cause joint changes. You may have noticed some deformity at these joints, a loss of movement and less ability to use your hand normally. A MCP joint replacement involves removing the old joint and replacing it with a new silicone hinged joint.



Before surgery



After surgery



Silicone hinged joint

What might I expect following surgery?

Following surgery your hand will be rested in a plaster splint with a bulky bandage for comfort. You will normally be seen by our hand therapy team within the first one to two weeks following your surgery. Your plaster splint will be replaced with two light weight thermoplastic splints and you will be taught exercises to start to get your hand moving. Following this you will then be seen on a regular basis to progress your hand therapy.

How do I look after my wound and why might my hand swell?

Following surgery it is important that you keep your dressing dry to avoid problems with your wound. Normally your stitches will be removed 14 days following your surgery. Once your wound is fully healed you will be shown how to use vasoline or sweet almond oil to massage your scar. You will be shown how to massage your scar to help prevent any excess scar tissue from causing problems and limiting your movement in your hand in the long term.

You will also be given advice regarding how to manage swelling in your hand. This may include elevating your hand above your heart level or through the use of compression (glove or tubigrip).

Why do I need to protect my joint replacements?

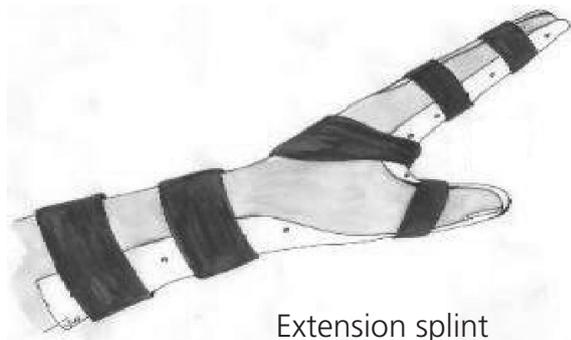
Following your surgery your new joints need protection to prevent them from further damage. The splints will help to protect your joint replacement.

You will be provided with two custom made thermoplastic splints which will be held in place with Velcro straps on your hand. One will hold your fingers completely straight (extension splint) and the other will hold your back knuckles in a bend (flexion splint). You will alternate wearing each splint for a full 24 hour period. These splints are designed to support the replaced joint/s and prevent your fingers from deviating towards your little finger.

From time to time your splint may need to be remoulded. Your splint must be worn at all times normally for the first 4 weeks and then at night and protection outdoors for a further four weeks unless advised by your therapist. You may be required to wear the straight splint at night for a little longer if there are problems with straightening your fingers on their own.



Flexion splint



Extension splint

What important advice should I follow?

- During the first 4 weeks you will not be able to use your hand for any activities as you will risk damaging your hand and your replaced joint/s. Following this you will be able to commence light daily activities with your hand.
- Driving is not advised for the first 6 weeks due to potential strain on the new joints.
- 8 weeks following your surgery you can return to your normal activities. You will be guided by your hand therapist when you can start certain activities.
- It is important that you keep you unaffected joints moving normally including your shoulder and elbow as they can stiffen if they remain still.
- If you notice any sudden pain, swelling, redness or a change in your fingers ability to move or your splint becomes too loose or tight please contact the hand therapy team

Please note this is only a guide and follow your individual hand therapist's instructions.

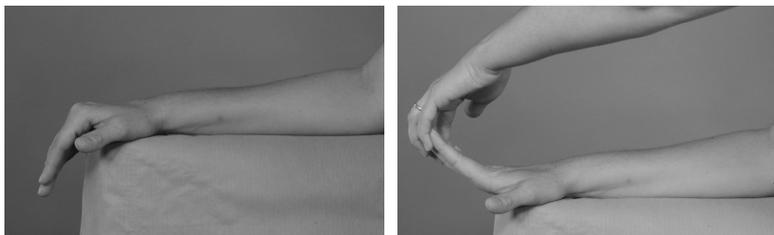
Who should I contact if I have any problems?

If you have any problems or questions regarding your hand therapy please contact the hand therapy team on **01642 835595**.

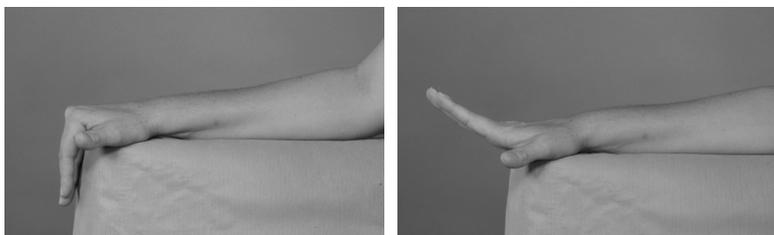
Why is it important to exercise?

Following surgery to replace your MCP joint/s your hand will be swollen and stiff and it is important to exercise to restore the movement and function of your hand. Exercises will also help with preventing scar tissue from adhering to structures in your hand that may restrict your movement.

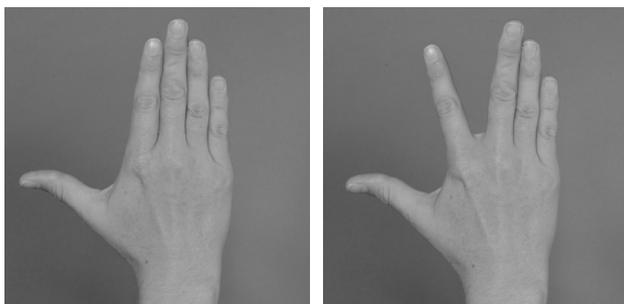
You will be taught the following exercises to help to restore the movement in your hand. Normally these exercises are completed every one to two hours throughout the day repeating each exercise 10 times.



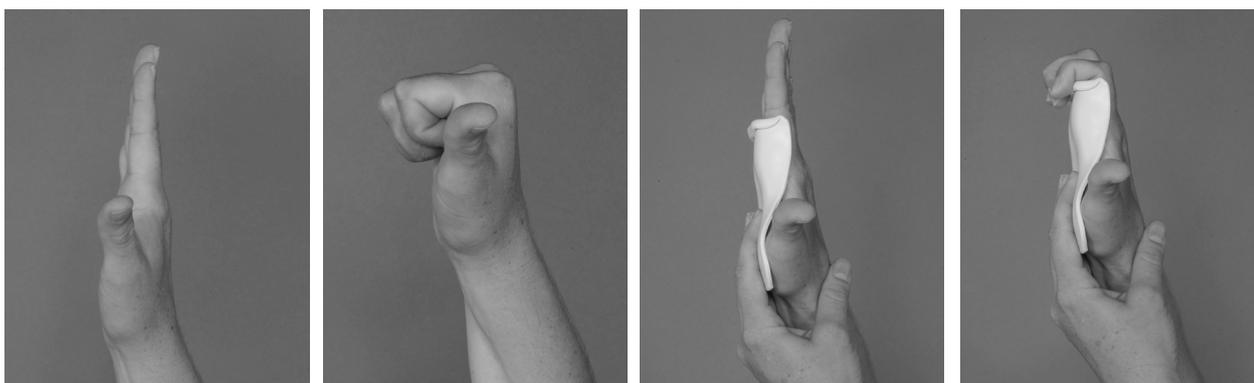
Rest your hand over the edge of a table with your knuckles unsupported. Use your other hand to stretch your fingers completely straight then try and hold your fingers in the straight position on their own for 3-5 seconds.



Rest your hand over the edge of a table with your knuckles supported. Straighten your fingers on their own and then bend forward while keeping your end joints straight.



Place your hand flat on a table with your fingers aligned straight. Walk your fingers towards your thumb.



Start with straight fingers, then bend into a fist then straighten again.

Curl the tips of your fingers into a hook shape while keeping your back knuckles straight then straighten your fingers again. You might be given a board to help with positioning for this exercise.

Author: Hand Therapy Team