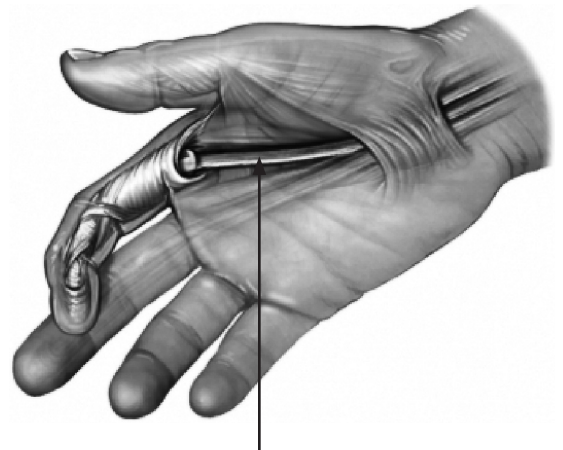


Advice and exercises following your flexor tendon repair

Patient information

What are your flexor tendons and why have these been repaired?

The large muscles on the front of your forearm are attached to tendons that cross the wrist. These tendons then attach on to the bones of your fingers which are responsible for bending different joints in your finger. They are important in allowing you to close your hand during activity and are essential in allowing you to function normally. Your tendon/s has been repaired to restore this normal function and you will need to undergo a strict hand therapy programme following this surgery to optimise your recovery and use of your hand.



Your flexor tendons bend your fingers



What might I expect following surgery?

Your tendon has been repaired with complex microsurgery and will need strict care to limit the possibility of re-injury of your repaired tendon (rupture). You will normally be seen by our hand therapy team within a few days of your surgery and then on a regular basis following this. You will not be able to use your hand for any activity i.e. gripping or lifting until at least 8 weeks after your surgery. Your tendon will take up to 12 weeks to completely heal and it is important to follow all advice to avoid rupturing your tendon.

Why is it important to protect my repaired tendon/s?

The repair will be weak and will require protection in a thermoplastic splint to prevent movements and activity that will risk rupturing your tendon. This lightweight splint will be moulded to your hand by a hand therapist and is to be worn 24 hours per day for the first six weeks. Following this for a further two weeks you will be allowed to remove your splint indoors, however you will need to continue wearing your splint whilst sleeping and if in crowded places while your tendon continues to heal.

While wearing your splint you will need to check your skin for red or sore areas and inform your therapist if you have any concerns. Do not place your splint in hot water or near a heater as this will affect its shape/fitting and result in the splint becoming uncomfortable to wear. Your arm and splint will need to be covered with a plastic bag when showering or bathing (please do not remove your splint).

Why is it important to look after my wound and scar?

Following surgery it is important that you keep your dressing dry to avoid problems with your wound. Normally your stitches will be removed 10-14 days following your surgery. Once your wound is fully healed you will be shown how to use vasoline or an oil (such as sweet almond oil) to massage your scar. This will help prevent any excess scar tissue from causing problems and limiting the movement in your hand long term. You will also be given advice regarding how to manage swelling in your finger or hand. This may include elevating your hand above your heart level or through the use of compression.

Why is it important to exercise?

Exercise is important to allow your tendon to heal. It will also reduce stiffness and swelling in your hand and fingers. Your hand therapist will teach you specific exercises which you must complete throughout the day – normally every **two** hours with **five** repetitions. Too much or too little exercise is dangerous with risk of rupture or adhesions to your repaired tendon/s if not followed precisely. Your hand therapist will advise you of when to move onto new exercises.

Weeks 1 – 6:



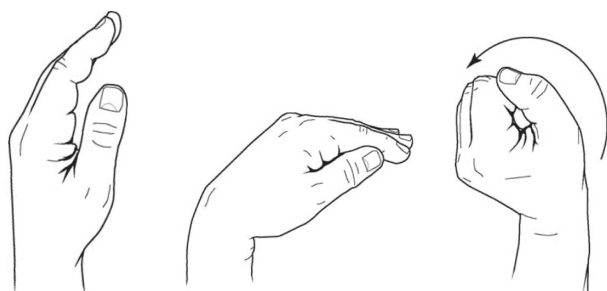
Using your **uninjured** hand, gently push each finger of your **injured** hand into the crease of your palm and hold them there for 3-5 seconds.

Gently let go and straighten the finger to the splint without help from your uninjured hand.



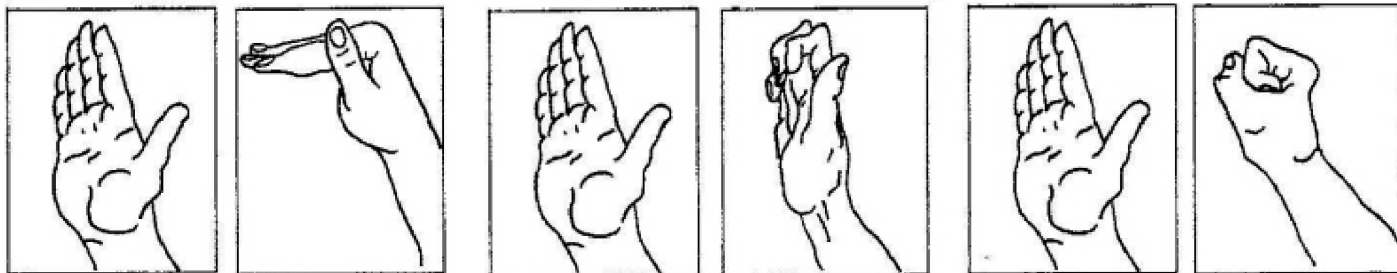
Bend all the fingers of your **injured** hand as far as they can go towards your palm – but do not squeeze a fist. Straighten your fingers to the splint without help from your uninjured hand.

You might be instructed to perform the following exercises 3 to 4 weeks following your surgery



Keeping your fingers relaxed at all times – start with a straight wrist and gently allow your wrist to relax forward (your fingers will straighten naturally). Then gently move your wrist backwards (your fingers will bend naturally).

The following exercises normally commence at week 6 onwards



Start with your fingers straight then bend them all forward at the back knuckles only like a flat table top.

Start with your fingers straight then hook them all forward keeping the back knuckles straight.

Start with your fingers straight then make a full fist with them all.

What important advice should I follow?

- Do your exercises regularly as instructed during the day then rest completely between exercises
- Do not use your hand for anything other than your exercises until advised by your hand therapist
- Keep your hand elevated as much as practically possible to prevent swelling in your hand
- Move your elbow and shoulder through full range of movement every day to prevent stiffness in these joints
- Keep your splint on 24 hours a day for up to 6 weeks – DO NOT remove your splint unless advised by your hand therapist
- Do not attempt to alter your splint – if you have concerns with how it is fitting please contact your hand therapist
- Keep your splint and wound dry using a plastic bag in the bath or shower
- Do not allow your splint to get hot as may change how it fits and become uncomfortable
- Stop or cut down smoking as this will help with your healing
- You will not be able to resume driving until at least 8 weeks following your surgery
- Do not play contact sports or heavy activities for 12-16 weeks
- 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 your hand therapist

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**.

Author: Hand Therapy Team