

# Extensor tendon injury

## iCAM regime for zone 5 (page 1 of 6)

The injury that you have sustained is to the tendons that move the fingers of your hand out straight.

Tendons are like puppet strings, with a muscle at one end and attached to bones at the other end. When the muscle contracts, movement is produced.

The tendons that you have injured are called extensor tendons. The muscle is in your forearm, and the tendons run up the back of your hand and attach to the end of your finger.

You have injured this tendon(s) over the back of your hand or wrist, where the skin is thin and they are close to the surface, therefore very easy to cut or damage.

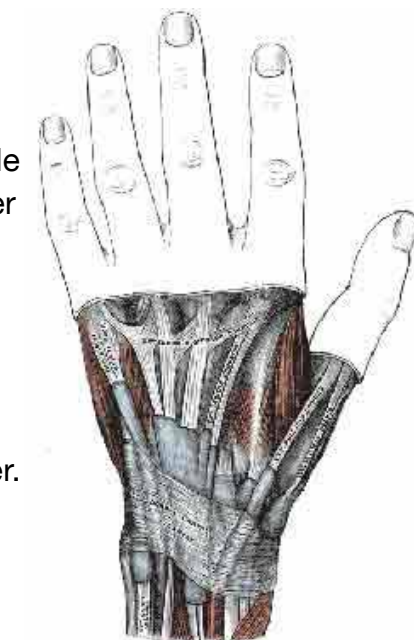
The tendons are likely to have been repaired by a surgeon. Now you have the task of rehabilitating your hand and getting the movement back, with the help of your therapist.

If you do not move tendons while they are healing, they get stuck around the healing scar tissue and cannot pull your fingers up and down. If you move them too much, or stretch them too far, they can break at the point of surgery. This is called a 'rupture' of the tendon and needs surgery to repair it again, which is not always possible a second time. **So it is very important that you listen to your therapist and do exactly as you are instructed.**

This rehabilitation regime is designed to protect your repaired tendon but allow your hand as much movement as possible to prevent the joints getting stiff and the repaired tendon from getting stuck in scar tissue.

### The splints

You will have two splints to wear at first.



Extensor tendons of the hand



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You are entitled to a copy of any letter we write about you. Please ask if you want one when you come to the hospital.

Please complete The Friends & Family Test to tell us about your experience at: [www.salisbury.nhs.uk/FriendsFamily](http://www.salisbury.nhs.uk/FriendsFamily) or download our App from the Apple App store or Google Play Store.

The evidence used in the preparation of this leaflet is available on request. Please email: [patient.information@salisbury.nhs.uk](mailto:patient.information@salisbury.nhs.uk) if you would like a reference list.

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## Day 1 - 21 (0 - 3 weeks)

You will have an appointment to see the nurse and have your dressing changed. At this point you will see a therapist who will make your splints and start you doing your exercises.

- wear BOTH splints AT ALL TIMES
- massage the scar if the wound is healed
- light use of the hand within the confines of the splints.
- no heavy lifting, no sports, no driving.
- elevate the hand when you are not using it.
- **do not remove your splints**, not in the shower or at night, and keep the hand, splints and dressings if you have them clean and dry as best you can.
- exercises:

Pump the whole arm in the air 15 times, every half an hour or so (this helps with swelling)

Plus...

Hand exercises to move your fingers within the confines of your splints:



Start and finish position for all exercises - fingers fully straight



### Hook

Curl the tips of the fingers down into a hook position.

Do this 5 times





**Fist**

Curl the fingers into a fist, as far as they will go within the splint.  
Do this 5 times



**Puppet**

Keeping the fingers straight, bend them down at the big knuckle, as though making a puppet mouth move.  
Do this 5 times

.....per day

You may well see the therapist every week at this stage in your rehabilitation, to adjust the splint as the swelling goes down and to check the healing of the wound and your exercises and range of movement.

**Day 22 - 35 (3 - 5 weeks)**

- you must continue to wear the yoke splint at ALL times
- you may remove the wrist splint for exercises and light use (such as dressing or eating. No weight heavier than a cup of tea)
- you must wear the wrist splint for medium to heavy use of the hand
- no sports or driving
- continue to scar massage and treat swelling as instructed
- exercises:

You now perform the exercises out of the wrist splint, but in the yoke splint.



### Wrist movement

Gently move your wrist forwards, allowing the fingers to go straight.

Then gently move the wrist back, allowing the fingers to curl

Do this 10 times



These are the same exercises that you were doing in your yoke and wrist splint, so see previous instructions.

Do this 10 times



Do this 10 times



Do this 10 times

..... per day

### Day 36 - 49 (5 - 7 weeks)

- you no longer need the wrist splint, unless otherwise instructed
- you must wear your yoke splint at ALL other times
- continue to treat your scar and swelling as instructed
- exercises.

You now carry out your exercises without any splints on your hand.

You may also start some strengthening exercises under the guidance of your therapist.

### Day 50 onwards (7 weeks)

- you no longer need to wear your splint unless instructed otherwise by your therapist
- you will start to gradually build up the strength in your hand.
- driving.

### 12 weeks (3 months)

- heavy use
- contact sport.

Please be advised that you have a complex injury to the mechanism of tendons on the back of your hand. All the above instructions are a guideline only and may be changed as the experienced therapist treating you reviews your progress and advises you.

## Useful numbers

**Plastics dressing clinic** – for any concerns regarding wound, dressing, infection, dressings appointments

☎ 01722 336262 ext 3254

**Hand Therapy** – for any concerns regarding splint, exercises, and therapy appointments

☎ 01722 336262 ext 3530, or 01722 345530

**Odstock Ward** – for any concerns out of normal working hours

☎ 01722 336262 ext 3507

Don't forget, your GP can also help you with any concerns you have about pain, infection or problems generally related to your hand.

We hope this is helpful and you have a good outcome from your hand injury.

