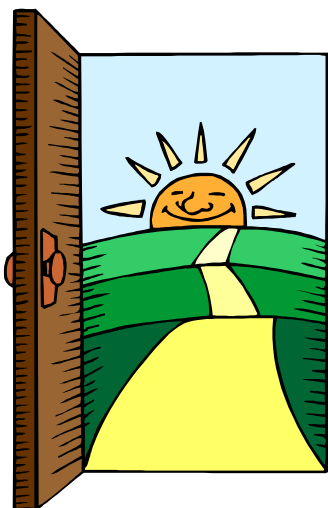


# EXTENSOR Tendon Injuries (page 1 of 3)



You have received very delicate surgery to repair the tendon(s) that straightens your thumb.

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

## Care of your hand after the operation

### Preventing swelling

If you let your hand hang down, it will make your swelling worse. This will make your hand painful and stiff, stop it from working properly and slow down the healing process.

Your hand must be kept above the level of your heart:

- until your hand is no longer swollen (this may take a few weeks)
- at night; you should rest your hand and arm up 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.



### Protecting the repaired tendon(s) from breaking

In order to protect your repaired tendon(s), a light plastic splint will be made which you will wear until your tendon(s) have healed.

If you need your information in another language or medium (audio, large print, etc) please contact Customer Care on 0800 374 208 or send an email to: [customercare@salisbury.nhs.uk](mailto:customercare@salisbury.nhs.uk)

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.

## Weeks 1-5

### Do not take your splint off

As you move your thumb your tendons glide in your hand. After injury/surgery your tendon(s) may not glide so well. The following exercises will help your tendon(s) to glide as it heals.

It is very important that you do these as instructed.

1. using the other hand, gently lift your fingers away from your splint so that they are completely straight, hold for 5 seconds. Then, without using your other hand lower the fingers back to the splint
2. without using your other hand carefully lift your thumb up and away from your splint
3. bend the tip of your thumb down towards the splint – you may want to use a finger from your other hand to support your thumb, just under the joint
4. straighten the tip of your thumb
5. gently lower your whole thumb back down into the splint.

**Do this 2 times.**

These exercises must be done with care, and **every hour during the day.**

Do not do any more exercises than your therapist has told you to do - otherwise you may damage the tendon repair.

If you do not do these exercises your tendon(s) will not glide well in your hand and your thumb will become very stiff.

## Weeks 5-7

### Wear your splint at all times, except when exercising

At this point Velcro straps will be added to your splint so that you can remove it for careful hand washing (not showering/bathing) and for your exercises.

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 risk damaging the tendon repair.

## Weeks 7-9

### Wear your splint at night, remove for exercises and light function

You will be instructed on further exercises and activities to improve the movement and use of your hand, these exercises may involve strengthening your hand.

You will be advised by your therapist how much you can use the hand at this stage.

## Weeks 9-12

### You will not need to wear your splint anymore

You can return to normal daily activities and driving at this stage.

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

## Weeks 12+

Normal use of your hand with no restrictions.

### Points to remember

- keep your hand above your heart all day and night for the first 2 weeks.
- do “pumping exercises” every half an hour.
- do not let an hour pass without carrying out your finger exercises.
- do not use your injured hand for anything!
- do not remove your splint, or attempt to alter it.
- do not get your splint wet.
- do not drive.

### Contact details

If your splint is uncomfortable, or if you are at all worried about your hand, please contact us on the following numbers.

### 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.

### Follow up

You will be seen in the Outpatient Department within 5 days of your surgery. After this you will be seen every week. Depending on where you live, you may be referred to a local therapist after your second appointment.

