

Therapy following a burn to the hand or thumb *(page 1 of 7)*

Introduction

We hope this leaflet will give you all the information you need after you have had a burn injury to your hand. If you have any questions or problems please contact the Burns & Plastics Therapy Team on 01722 336262 ext 3125.

The basics about a burn

A burn is a type of injury caused by heat, electricity, chemicals, friction or radiation. Treatment required varies depending on the depth, size and location of the burn.

Advice on swelling

Swelling is a normal reaction to a burn and is part of your body's healing process. However, swelling has to be carefully managed to help reduce pain, encourage tissue healing and prevent any complications.

- **keep your hand raised at all times.** This can be done by holding your hand across your chest at shoulder level
- **use pillows to raise your injured hand** so that it is resting above heart level whilst you are sleeping
- **complete 10 - 15 arm pumping exercises every 30 minutes during the day.** This involves pumping your whole arm up and down in the air, reaching for the ceiling. This helps to drain the swelling and prevent stiffness at your elbow and shoulder.

Importance of physiotherapy and occupational therapy

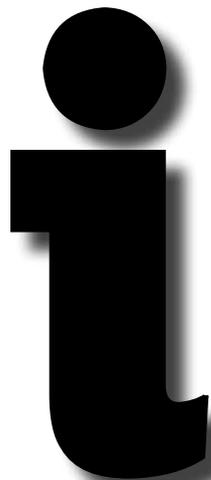
Following the advice and treatment given to you by the therapists will help you achieve the best possible outcome after your injury. In turn this will help get you back to your previous level of activity.

Completing the exercises given to you will help reduce swelling and pain, increase your range of movement, improve function and dexterity and minimise scarring.

You must take regular pain relief to ensure you can exercise effectively. If pain is stopping you doing the exercises properly, you should get in touch with your nurse, GP or a member of the burns team at your next appointment.

Burns Unit

 **01722 345507**



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: customer care@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 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 if you would like a reference list.

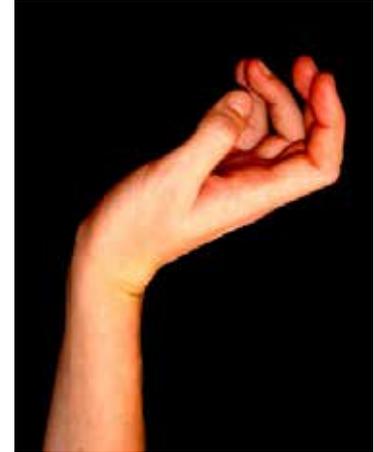
Name: Megan Gibson
Role: Physiotherapist
Date written: May 2017
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Hand and thumb exercises

1. Start with your fingers and wrist straight. Slowly bend your wrist forwards, then take it back as far as you can.

Your fingers may bend as you take your wrist back – this is normal.

Do the exercise.....times.



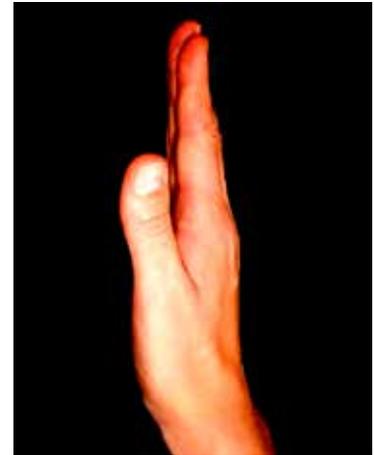
2. Start with your fingers and wrist straight. Gently curl the tips of your fingers down towards the top of your palm. Then straighten all your fingers back out to the start position.

Do the exercise.....times.



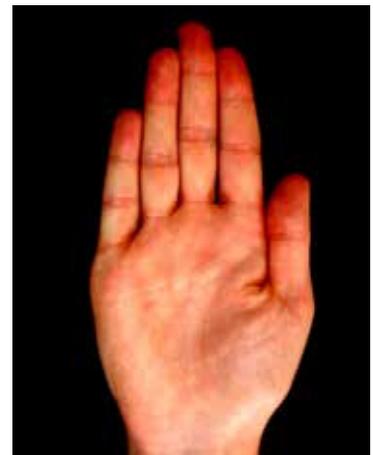
3. Start with your fingers and wrist straight. Squeeze your fingers together and bend at the knuckles. Make sure your fingers are straight at all times. Then straighten all your fingers back out to the start position.

Do the exercise.....times.



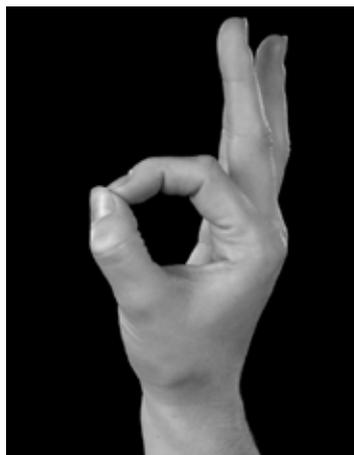
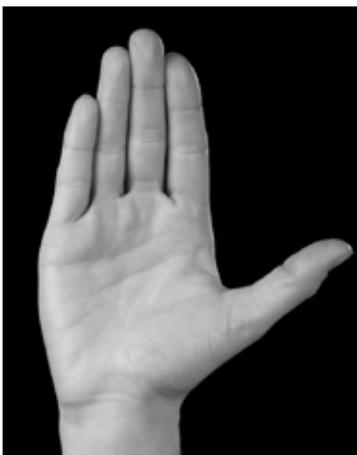
4. Start with your fingers and wrist straight. Gently bend the tips of your fingers down towards the bottom of your hand. Then straighten all your fingers back out to the start position.

Do the exercise.....times.



5. Start with your thumb and fingers straight. Touch the tip of your thumb to the tip of each finger in turn, making an "O" shape. Return to the starting position between making each "O".

Do the exercise.....times.



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6. Start with your fingers and wrist straight. Spread your fingers as far apart as possible. Bring them back together again. Remember to include your thumb in these exercises.

Do the exercise.....times.



7. Start with your fingers and wrist straight. Gently curl your fingers into the palm making a fist. Move your thumb so that it lies across your index and middle finger. Then straighten all your fingers back out to the start position.

Do the exercise.....times.



8. Start with your thumb and fingers straight. Gently reach your thumb across the palm of your hand towards the bottom of your little finger. Return to the starting position.

Do the exercise.....times.



Therapy following a burn to the hand or thumb (5 of 7)

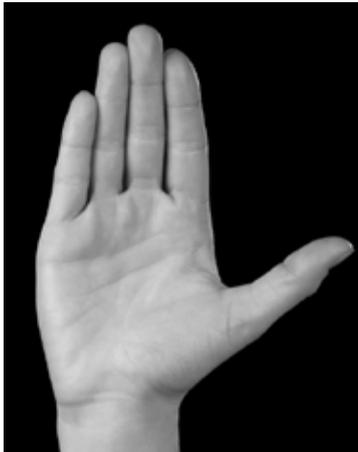
9. Start with your thumb and fingers straight. Hold just below the top joint of your injured thumb using the thumb and index finger of the other hand. Gently bend and straighten the tip of your thumb.

Do the exercise.....times.



10. Start with your fingers straight. Move your thumb away from your fingers as far as you can. Make a big circle with your thumb. Repeat in the other direction.

Do the exercise.....times.



11. Start with your thumb positioned in your palm and in line with your index finger. Keeping your thumb in line with your index finger bring your thumb out towards you. Hold for a few seconds. Return to the starting position.

Do the exercise.....times.



12. Start with your hand flat on the table, with your palm facing down. Lift your thumb up to the ceiling, making sure the rest of your hand stays on the table. Hold for a few seconds. Return to the starting position.

Do the exercise.....times.



Using your injured hand

We encourage you to use your injured hand for clean dry tasks as much as possible. Initially, this may be restricted to lighter activities such as picking up a drinks bottle. However, as the swelling and pain reduce, we expect you to use your hand more for more dextrous tasks such as using cutlery.

Scar management advice

When your burn is healed, moisturising is very important to prevent skin breakdown. The healed skin will be dry, therefore massaging cream 2-3 times a day will help to keep the skin supple. Dry, tight skin may limit movement and function.

Adapting to the appearance of your burn

You may find that you have difficulty adjusting to the appearance of your burn. If this is the case then you should get in touch with your nurse, GP or a member of the burns team at your next appointment.

Living one handed

Living one handed even for a short time can pose some challenges. We advise you to dress the affected hand first, and undress it last. When washing it is important to keep the bandage dry, therefore covering it with a plastic bag is sensible. Putting your plate on a non-slip mat can make eating easier.

Burns prevention

Listed below are things to take extra care with to reduce the risk of further burn injuries.

- kitchen – kettles, oven, hob, hot drinks
- bathroom – bath/shower temperature
- iron, straighteners, hot water bottles
- fireplace, matches, lighters, BBQ's
- sunburn.

Contact details

The Burns Unit

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BUGS – Burns Unit Group Support

BUGS is a charity run by volunteers who provide help and support to those affected by burn injuries. www.bugssalisbury.co.uk