



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

University College Hospital Galway,
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Western Region,
Galway.
Health Service Executive,
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Flexor Tendon Repair Information Leaflet
Departments of Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy, University Hospital Galway

Please read this leaflet carefully and if there is anything you do not understand, or if you require further information, please contact your therapist.

Introduction

Flexor tendons are like thick strings that lie just under your skin. These tendons are very important as they connect muscle to bone and bend your fingers and thumb into your palm. The flexor tendons in your hand have now been repaired, this is a very complicated surgery and requires that you follow a specialised therapy programme to help your hand and arm to heal properly.

Splint Wearing Instructions

Your occupational therapist has provided you with a plastic splint which you must wear in order to reduce the risk of snapping your tendon repairs.

Your splint should fit like this	This is what your splint should look like when the tubigrip hood is in place	Your hand should not be positioned like this in your splint
		

- The splint must be worn at all times, **day and night**, for 6 weeks following surgery. The elastic hood on the splint is to be removed for exercise only.
- **Do not remove the splint for any reason.** Removal of the splint should be under the direction and supervision of your surgeon or therapist only.
- Your hand and splint must be kept dry, so when bathing or showering place a plastic bag over the splint.
- Do not adapt or tamper with the splint. If the splint is causing you any of the following problems please contact the occupational therapy department:

- | | |
|---|-------------------|
| -a rash, red, blistered or broken skin | -numbness |
| -pain | -pins and needles |
| -swelling | -discolouration |
| -the splint is not fitting correctly or the splint breaks | |

Precautions

It will take 12 weeks for your tendons to heal fully. In order to decrease the risk of snapping your tendon you must take the following precautions.

- Do not use your hand at all when the splint is on **except** for exercises outlined below
- **After your splint has been removed** you can use your hand for light activity. E.g. getting dressed, eating.
- Do not forcibly grip or squeeze anything-including “squeezy balls” for 8 weeks.
- Do not drive, play sport/musical instruments for 12 weeks.

Exercises

For the next 6 weeks you must perform the following exercises **every 2 hours**. These exercises are known as the early active movement regime or are sometimes called the Belfast regime.

Before commencing your exercises you must remove the tubigrip (elastic) hood from your splint.

<p>10 passive flexions- Gently push your injured finger in towards the palm of your hand. Hold for a count of 10. Gently release your finger and let it relax back towards the splint.</p>	
<p>5 active flexions- Gently bend your finger in towards the palm of your hand. We do not expect you to get all the way in on the first try. Over the next few weeks you should be able to get a bit further each time.</p>	
<p>5 active extensions Using the uninjured hand use block the fingers into a bend at the 1st row of knuckles and gently straighten up the fingers of the affected hand. Do not use your other hand to push your fingers back towards the splint as you could damage the repaired tendon.</p>	

Also give your shoulder and elbow a full stretch above your head.
Reach your thumb over to touch the bottom of your little finger.

It is recommended that you keep your arm elevated to minimise swelling. Swelling acts like glue if it stays in place and sticks the tendons together so it is important to keep it under control. You can have your arm in a sling or you can prop it up on pillows so that your hand is higher than your heart. Do not walk with your hand down by your side or sit with your hand in your lap. Talk to your physiotherapist about other strategies to help with swelling & scarring.

You need to contact the team or come back to Accident and Emergency if:

- you feel a sudden pop or snap in your hand
- you cannot move your fingers.
- your fingers go blue.
- your fingers become very swollen.
- you have severe pain.
- your hand becomes very hot

The final success of your operation depends on you.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact your therapist.

Your Occupational Therapist is: ___Alisha Kelly___
Telephone: 091 542431 or 544544 Bleep 677

Your Physiotherapist is: ___Brian Ó Ceallaigh___
Telephone: 091 544489 or 091 542131 Bleep 705

Opening Hours: Monday – Friday 8.30 to 4.00