

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 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.



- 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:

- | | |
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| -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 overleaf.
- **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” until instructed by your physiotherapist
- 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**.

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

<p>Passive flexions</p> <p>Open the strap nearest the finger tips.</p> <p>With the wrist back in extension, use the other hand to push each digit individually to palm (ensure that all three finger joints are bent).</p> <p>This exercise can be performed as many times as is necessary to overcome the stiffness in the fingers</p>	
<p>Alternate between the following 2 exercises and repeat 15 times</p> <p><u>Close the strap nearest the finger tips before starting this exercise.</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Bend your wrist backwards into extension - at the same time gently bend all four digits towards palm as if you are trying to curl your fingers into a hook or a cats's claw position. <p>Try to make the tips bend.</p> <p>We do not expect you to get all the way in on the first try. Gradually over 6 weeks we expect you to progress to a full hook fist.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">2. Bend your wrist forwards into flexion and gently straighten out the fingers to touch the roof of your splint. <p>Do not use your other hand to push your fingers back towards the splint as you could damage the repaired tendon.</p> <p>Repeat these 2 exercises 15 times.</p> <p>When you have completed this series of exercises reapply the tubigrip hood.</p>	 
<p>Fully stretch your shoulder and elbow above your head.</p> <p>Stretch your thumb over to touch the bottom of your little finger.</p>	

It is recommended that you keep your arm up to reduce 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.

Alisha Kelly

Occupational Therapist

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Opening Hours: Monday – Friday 8.00 to 4.00

Brian Ó Ceallaigh

Physiotherapist

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