

### 3. Active Extension

.....x / hour

Bend all fingers towards palm (without help from other hand) and straighten fingers.

- ❖ **Always after 1 and 2**
- ❖ **Never against resistance or Dressings**
- ❖ Stretch shoulders and elbows every 2 hours
- ❖ Keep hand elevated at all times to prevent swelling

### Splint information

- ❖ The splint is fitted to prevent you from straightening your fingers, and to protect the repaired tendon.
- ❖ Your splint should not be removed unless instructed, that includes during showering or bathing. A plastic bag can be positioned over you hand to keep it dry.
- ❖ If the splint comes into contact with any form of heat, e.g. hot water, sitting in front of a fire/radiator, it will become soft and lose its shape.
- ❖ If there is sudden decrease in your finger movement, or the splint is causing any discomfort or is damaged, contact your therapist (phone number overleaf).

### ☎ Useful contact numbers

#### Hand Therapy

Carl Edwards,  
Specialist Physiotherapist  
Tel. ☎ (01803) 655340

Janette Thornsby  
Hand Therapist  
Tel. ☎ (01803) 654935

Flexor Tendon Surgery/Orthopaedics  
/SDHCNHSFT/09.12/review date09.14



South Devon Health Services

## PATIENT INFORMATION



# Following Flexor Tendon Surgery

*Hand Surgery*

## Flexor Tendon Repairs

Your flexor tendon has just been repaired, but it will continue to heal for the following 6 - 8 weeks. Your hand will be elevated whilst in hospital.

**Elevation** of your hand is important to prevent and reduce swelling - by wearing a sling or keeping your hand above heart level.

**Do not** walk with your hand dangling, or sit with your hand held in your lap.

Your dressing will be removed after 24-48 hours. If possible, no further dressing will be applied to avoid interference with movement.

There will be some swelling and bruising. Look out for any redness or tenderness in the area around the wound that might indicate an infection.

Do not apply antiseptic, but please contact the clinic if you have any worries.

Your hand is weak your Hand Therapist will put it in a protective splint which prevents the repair being over-stretched. This needs to be worn continuously for 4-5 weeks and then at night for a further 2 weeks.

**Early gentle movement** as instructed helps to prevent stiffness in your hand following your injury/surgery. This is intended to prevent the tendon becoming stuck in its tunnel, which would prevent the finger moving properly. The programme may be varied but is usually "Four Fours":

- ❖ 4 hourly.
- ❖ 4 passive flexions (gentle bends of the injured finger(s) into the palm with your other hand).
- ❖ 4 active flexions (bends using the repaired tendon).
- ❖ 4 active extensions (straighten finger(s) until the finger nails touch the splint).

### Do not:

- (i) remove your splint (4-5 weeks);
- (ii) attempt to use the hand for **anything** other than the exercises you have been shown. This includes gripping, squeezing, lifting, driving etc.

Beware stretching your repair when getting out of the bath, taking your hand out of a sleeve, opening doors, squeezing toothpaste tubes and friends who tell you to squeeze tennis balls!

**The repaired tendon is much weaker than normal and will take about 12 weeks to recover to full strength. If you do not follow this advice, the tendon repair may snap.**

**Do not** attempt to clean your hand as additional pressure may damage the repaired tendon.

### Exercise instructions

- ❖ **Make sure that dressings/straps do not block movement.**
- ❖ **Always do exercises in the following order:**

#### 1. Passive Flexion and Active Extension

.....x / hour

On operated hand, gently bend each finger in turn towards the palm using your unoperated hand. Then straighten your fingers back to the splint.

#### 2. Passive Flexion and Hold (+ relax) + Active Extension

.....x / hour

Bend all fingers together using unoperated hand, hold in bent position without help from other hand. Relax and straighten fingers to splint.