

# Thumb Flexor Tendon Repair - Post-operative exercises - Stage 1

Physiotherapy & Occupational Therapy

## Who is this leaflet for?

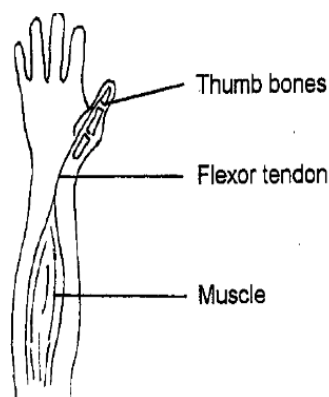
This leaflet is for patients who have had an operation known as a flexor tendon repair to the thumb. It explains the exercises you will need to do to help regain maximum movement and function after your operation. The exercises are divided into two stages – your therapist will inform you which exercises to do and when.

## What does the flexor tendon do?

Tendons are the bands of tissue which join muscles to bones.

The flexor tendon lies just beneath the skin on the front of your thumb. One end attaches to the bone in your thumb and the other end attaches to a muscle in your forearm.

When the muscle tightens it pulls on the tendon which bends the top joint of your thumb. To work properly the tendon must glide smoothly under the skin.



## Why is a flexor tendon injury a serious problem?

The flexor tendon is important for hand function. If you damage the tendon you will not be able to bend the tip of your thumb.

## How is the flexor tendon repaired?

If the tendon is cut, the ends move away from each other. An operation is necessary to repair the tendon, by bringing the cut ends together and securing them with a stitch.

**The prevention of infection is a major priority in all healthcare and everyone has a part to play.**

- Please decontaminate your hands frequently for 20 seconds using soap and water or alcohol gel if available
- If you have symptoms of diarrhoea and/or vomiting, cough or other respiratory symptoms, a temperature or any loss of taste or smell please do not visit the hospital or any other care facility and seek advice from 111
- Keep the environment clean and tidy
- Let's work together to keep infections out of our hospitals and care homes.

## What might affect the healing of the tendon after surgery?

There are two main risks which might delay or limit healing:

1. Breaking the repair. The stitch holding the tendon is very delicate and until the tendon has had sufficient time to heal, the repair will be at risk of breaking
2. The tendon becoming 'stuck'. The tendon heals by making scar tissue which acts like glue. If the tendon is kept still the scar tissue can stick to nearby bones and skin, and the tendon will not be able to glide and thereby move the thumb.

## How can I avoid these risks?

Initially your hand will be rested in a plaster or plastic splint. This will stop you stretching your thumb fully and thereby putting too much tension on the repair; it is very important that you do not remove the splint. It must be worn all the time, day and night for the first six weeks after your surgery.

At the same time you must start to move the thumb so that the tendon is allowed to glide – this should stop the tendon sticking.

## What are the Stage 1 exercises and what should I do in this phase?

**Do:**

- Wear the splint all the time.
- Keep your arm raised above heart level when resting.
- Lift your arm above your head regularly.
- Keep bending and straightening your fingers.
- Repeat exercises 1 and 2 five times each every two hours.

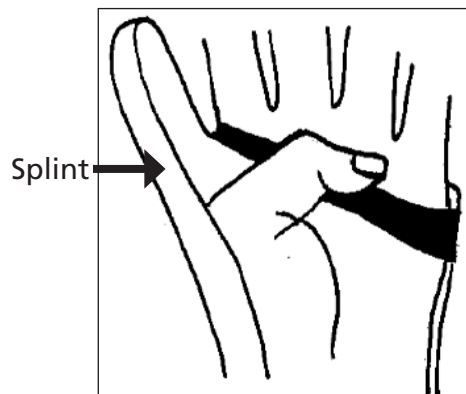
**Do not:**

- Remove the splint
- Push the thumb back against the splint with your other hand.

**Exercise 1:**

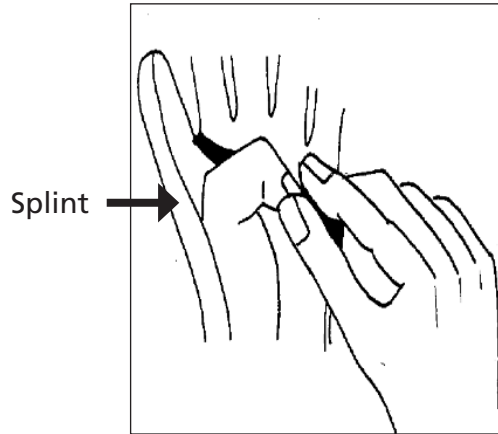
Bend the thumb across the palm as far as you can.

Keep the thumb bent for a few seconds, then straighten it back against the splint.



**Exercise 2:**

Push the thumb down across the palm, making sure you bend all three joints in the thumb. Hold the thumb in the bent position for five seconds.



**Are there any side-effects or precautions for the exercises?**

If the splint should become uncomfortable, or you suddenly lose movement in your thumb, please contact your therapist as soon as possible. You may also contact your consultant's secretary. Do not remove the splint.

**Who can I contact if I have any concerns or questions about my treatment?**

If you have concerns or queries about any aspect of these exercises or your splint, please contact your therapist.

Name of Therapist: .....

Contact telephone number: .....

Out of hours / emergency contact details: .....

## English

If you need information in another way like easy read or a different language please let us know.

If you need an interpreter or assistance please let us know.

## Lithuanian

Jeigu norėtumėte, kad informacija jums būtų pateikta kitu būdu, pavyzdžiui, supaprastinta forma ar kita kalba, prašome mums apie tai pranešti.

Jeigu jums reikia vertėjo ar kitos pagalbos, prašome mums apie tai pranešti.

## Polish

Jeżeli chcieliby Państwo otrzymać te informacje w innej postaci, na przykład w wersji łatwej do czytania lub w innym języku, prosimy powiedzieć nam o tym.

Prosimy poinformować nas również, jeżeli potrzebowaliby Państwo usługi tłumaczenia ustnego lub innej pomocy.

## Punjabi

ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪ ਵਿਚ, ਜਿਵੇਂ ਪੜ੍ਹਨ ਵਿਚ ਆਸਾਨ ਰੂਪ ਜਾਂ ਕਿਸੇ ਦੂਜੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ, ਚਾਹੀਦੀ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਦੱਸੋ।

ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਦੁਭਾਸ਼ੀਏ ਦੀ ਜਾਂ ਸਹਾਇਤਾ ਦੀ ਲੋੜ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਦੱਸੋ।

## Romanian

Dacă aveți nevoie de informații în alt format, ca de exemplu caractere ușor de citit sau altă limbă, vă rugăm să ne informați.

Dacă aveți nevoie de un interpret sau de asistență, vă rugăm să ne informați.

## Traditional Chinese

如果您需要以其他方式了解信息，如易读或其他语种，请告诉我们。

如果您需要口译人员或帮助，请告诉我们。