

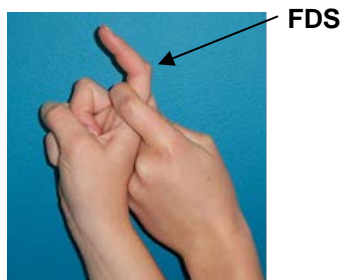
# A Guide for Flexor Tendon Repair

The following information is a guide only. You must follow the instructions given by your Doctor and Occupational Therapist to get the best result from your surgery.

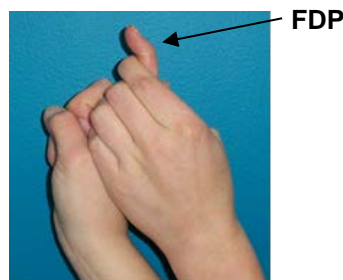
Each finger has two tendons that help to bend the finger into a fist.

1. Flexor Digitorum Superficialis (FDS)
2. Flexor Digitorum Profundus (FDP)

FDS bends the middle joint



FDP bends the end joint and also helps bend the middle joint



The tendons in each finger are connected to the adjacent fingers. This means that if one finger is moved, tension is put through the tendons in your other fingers. This is also the case when your wrist moves because the tendons start in your fingers and end in the muscles in your forearm. Therefore, after surgical repair, a plaster cast is applied to your entire hand and forearm to protect the repairs until a thermoplastic splint can be made by your Therapist. This splint will position your fingers and wrist to protect and prevent stretch of the repaired structures and avoid possible breaking (rupture) of the repaired tendon.

## How Can I Avoid Breaking My Repaired Tendon?

Your repaired tendon is fragile and may come apart again if you do not follow the protective protocol and exercise program.

- Wear your splint **24 hours per day**
- **Do Not** remove your splint. When having a shower, wear a plastic bag over your splint and hand to avoid getting it wet and protect repair.
- **Do Not** use your repaired hand for any activity, ie. do not use your thumb or fingers to pick anything up.
- **Do Not** do more than the prescribed exercises given by your Occupational Therapist.
- **Do Not** play sport and avoid activities that have a risk of falling or that involve sudden movement.

## How Long Do I Have To Wear My Splint?

**Your splint is to be worn at all times**, usually for about 6 weeks after surgery. You will need to attend Occupational Therapy regularly so that your progress can be monitored.

From six weeks following your flexor tendon surgery, with your Doctor's and/or Occupational Therapist's approval, you may reduce the wearing of your splint to wearing it only at night while sleeping and for protection in public places. Movement of your fingers out of the splint will begin and you can use your hand

for light tasks. Do not use your injured hand to grip or grasp tightly e.g. cutting a piece of steak or turning a tight tap. **This is one of the most risky times for tendon rupture because it is easy to overuse the hand when the splint first comes off.**

From 8-12 weeks after surgery, your splint can be discarded and resistance will be gradually added to your exercise regime. Activities using your hand can slowly be increased.

## When Can I Begin To... ..?

- Drive 8-12 weeks after the repair but only with permission from your Doctor.
- Return to Work This depends on the type of work you do. Discuss return to work with your Doctor, as medical clearance may be required by your workplace to ensure your safety at work.
- Play Sport 12 weeks after the repair.

## Will My Tendon Ever Be Full Strength?

Repaired flexor tendons regain about 90% of their original strength. In most instances, they are strong enough to return to all pre injury activities by 3 months after the repair. There may be a few precautions that extend beyond 3 months, but these occur only in isolated cases and will be discussed with you by your Doctor or Occupational Therapist.

## What Exercises Do I Need To Do?

Your Occupational Therapist will give you different exercises at each stage of healing. These will help you to get the best result from your repair. It is therefore very important that you attend all of your appointments and conduct your exercises as per your therapist's instructions.

## Why Are Exercises Important?

- To help prevent your scar tissue from sticking to other structures in the hand
- To prevent joint stiffness
- To improve circulation in the hand, which is necessary for tendon healing
- To create a stronger tendon repair
- To help to reduce swelling
- To regain functional use of your hand.

If you have any reason to suspect that your tendon repair has ruptured, please present to the Department of Emergency Medicine at your local hospital immediately. Do Not Wait Overnight.

**Please contact your therapist if you have any queries or concerns.**

**Therapist:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone: (07) 3646 7100**