

Active Thumb Flexor Tendon Protocol

Week 0 – 6

The tendon that bends your thumb has been repaired. It will take at least 8 weeks following your surgery for the tendon to heal and 12 weeks until you can return to unlimited activities. You will therefore need advice from your Therapist and Doctor on when to begin specific activities again.

Do

- Keep your arm/hand elevated to minimise swelling.
- Lift your arm above your head regularly to maintain shoulder movement.
- Bend and straighten your elbow regularly to maintain movement.
- Gently bend your fingers into a fist and then straighten them out regularly to maintain movement.
- Keep your splint on at all times for the next 6 weeks.
- Secure a plastic bag over your splint while showering to keep it dry.
- If your splint breaks or moves so that it is no longer protecting your hand you must contact your Therapist immediately.
- If you suddenly lose the ability to bend your thumb (without assistance) you must contact your Therapist or go to the emergency department.

Do Not

- Do not use your injured hand.
- Do not remove your splint at any times unless asked to do so by your Occupational Therapist.
- Do not push your thumb back towards the splint with the other hand (i.e. no passive straightening).
- Do not perform more than the recommended amount of hand exercises.
- Do not drive/lift or grip

Exercises Weeks 0 – 6

Remove the thumb strap of your splint and perform the following exercises.

Every hour:



Relax your thumb and use your other hand to bend the tip of your thumb down into your palm. **Hold for 10-30 seconds.**

Gently straighten your thumb back so the tip just touches the back of the splint.

Repeat 5 times.

5 Times Daily:



Exercise 1:

Relax your thumb and use your other hand to bend your thumb tip down into your palm, then let go and gently keep the position with your own muscle power. **Hold for 3-5 seconds.**

Gently straighten your thumb so the tip just touches the back of the splint.

Repeat 5 times.



Exercise 2:

Slowly bend your fingers to make a loose fist without assistance. Do not try to make a gripping fist, and ensure all your finger joints are bending.

Straighten all your fingers so your fingertips just touch the back of the splint.

Repeat 5 times.



Exercise 3

Using your own muscle power, gently bend your thumb across your palm to the base of your little finger (keeping the tip of your thumb straight). **Hold for 3-5 seconds.**

Gently straighten your thumb so the tip just touches the back of the splint.

Repeat 5 times.

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Weeks 6 – 8

It is now 6 weeks since your operation. Your tendon is becoming stronger but still requires protection. You will not be able to return to unlimited activities until 12 weeks following your operation. It is very important that you follow the instructions given to you by your Therapist to get the best outcome for your hand.

You can start to remove your splint during light activities throughout the day. You still need to take advice from your Therapist on when you may begin specific activities again.

Do

- Remove your splint and use your hand normally for light activities within your pain limits, as instructed by your hand therapist e.g. showering, dressing, eating, keyboarding, hand writing, gesturing etc.
- Continue to wear your splint when you are at risk of getting knocked/bumped or when you are at risk of using your hand for moderate to heavy activity or tight gripping.
- Continue to massage your scar.
- Wear your splint overnight.

Do Not (You must follow the advice below to avoid breaking the repaired tendon(s).)

- Do not push your thumb straight with the other hand.
- Do not push your wrist back with the other hand.
- Do not use your injured hand to grip or grasp tightly e.g. opening a tight jar/door/bottle, turning a tight tap, chopping a tough piece of meat/hard vegetable.
- Do not straighten your fingers and bend your wrist right back at the same time.
- Do not make a fist and bend your wrist down at the same time.
- Do not lift anything greater than 1kg at 6 weeks following your operation, 2kg at 7 weeks following your operation, and 5kg at 8 weeks following your operation.
- Do not drive until you have clearance from your Doctor and/or your Occupational Therapist.

Exercises Weeks 6 – 8

Complete 5 times daily:

- Thumb Active Exercises + Thumb Blocking Exercises – see exercise sheet attached.
- Active Wrist Exercises – see exercise sheet attached.

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

Therapist: _____

Phone: (07) 3646 7100