

## Occupational Therapy (Hand Therapy)

# Exercise regime following repair of flexor tendon



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This is your exercise regime after the surgery. Your exercises will be increased as you progress through the stages of recovery.

## **Exercise Regime (forearm based splint for 6 weeks + 2 weeks)**

Exercise **6 times** a day. Each time do **6** repetitions of each movement. **Do not force any movements.** Movements should not be more painful than it would be expected after the surgery. **Do not clench into a tight fist.**

**Actively** means moving a finger joint by yourself without help from your unaffected hand.

**Passively** means using your unaffected hand to move a joint.

### **Week 1 (the week from the operation) and Week 2** (stitches are removed at the end of week 2)



Using your unaffected hand, **passively** bend the top 2 joints of each finger into a hook; and passively hold for 5 seconds (**passive hook**)



Continue from the passive hook; use your unaffected hand to bend the knuckles joints down together into a fist. Passively hold for 5 second (**Passive fist**).

## Continued Week 1 and Week 2



**Actively** straighten the fingers to the splint without help from your unaffected hand



Place 3 fingers of your unaffected hand across the palm of your operated hand. This is to guide how far you can bend your finger in each stage of recovery without forcing the tendon too far.

## Continued Week 1 and Week 2



**Actively** curl your fingers down from the top joint of your fingers to touch

- The **top** finger of your unaffected hand in the palm in Week 1
- Actively straighten your fingers towards the splint



- The **middle** finger of your unaffected hand in the palm in **Week 2**
- Actively straighten your fingers towards the splint

## Week 3

- Commence scar massage after removal of stitches and when the wound is fully healed.
- Massage scar 3 times a day with a non-perfumed moisturising cream (E45®; Diprobase®; Aveeno®, Nivea® etc.)
- Massage each finger or the palm for 3 to 5 minutes each time.
- Your Occupational Therapist may put a wide strap on your splint at your fingers if you are not able to straighten the middle joint of your finger well. This strap should be applied **loosely**. You need to remove this additional strap when exercising your fingers.



Continue exercises as in Week 2; but you can now **actively** bend the finger down to touch the last finger of the 3 fingers guide of your unaffected hand.

## Week 4 and Week 5



Continue your exercises as in Week 3; and you can now actively curl the whole finger down, starting from the top joints into a loose fist (**Active fist**).

**Do not attempt to make a tight fist or force your hand into a fist.**

## Continued Week 4 and Week 5



### **Place and hold exercise**

Use your unaffected hand to bend the fingers down into the palm (**passive fist**); then, hold the fingers down without the help from your unaffected hand for 5 seconds

**(Active hold).**



## Continued Week 4 and Week 5



Place your unaffected hand on the back of your operated hand keeping the knuckle Joints bent.

Gently straighten the top 2 joints of your finger without help from your unaffected hand.



### Commence active wrist movement

- Remove your splint.
- Rest your arm and hand on a table
- Keeping the **fingers in a relaxed posture**; **gently** move the wrist forwards, your fingers will naturally straighten.



Gently move your wrist backwards; your fingers will naturally curl up.

- **Do not** bend the wrist forwards when your hand is in a fist.
- **Do not** straighten your wrist backwards when your fingers are straight.
- **Put the splint back on after wrist exercises.**

## Week 6 and Week 7

Starting from \_\_\_\_\_, you can exercise your wrist and hand **out of your splint**. You need to **put the splint back on** when your fingers are at risk of being injured and when you are in bed.

From Week 6, your therapist may make a small finger splint for you if you have difficulty in straightening the top two joints of the finger. This small splint is to keep the top 2 joints straight. You need to wear the small splint inside your forearm based dorsal splint at night.

Exercise 6 times a day. Each time do 6 repetitions of each movement.

Continue exercise as per Week 5 but exercise your hand out of the splint.



Keep the knuckle joint of the operated finger bent and use your unaffected hand to **gently** straighten the middle joint of your operated finger.

**(Passive stretch).**



### **Additional exercises:**

Keeping your wrist in neutral flat position, gently straighten all your fingers without help from your unaffected hand.



## Continued Week 6 and Week 7



### Hook fist (clawing)

- Hold the knuckle joints flat
- Bend the top 2 joints of fingers down
- Straighten your fingers



### Flat fist

- Bend all the fingers down as if making a fist but keep the end joint of the fingers straight
- Straighten your fingers



### Full fist

- Curl all your finger to make a fist  
**Do not clench your fist tightly**
- Straighten your fingers

## Continued Week 6 and Week 7



### Isolated joint movement of finger

- Use your unaffected hand to support just below the top joint of your operated finger
- Gently bend the end joint of your finger down
- Straighten the finger

## Week 8

Starting from \_\_\_\_\_, you do not need to wear your forearm based dorsal splint anymore.

Your therapist may make you a hand extension splint if you have difficulty in straightening the fingers yourself.

You can **increase** your exercises up to every hour. For each set, do **10 repetitions** of each movement.

As well as continuing your wrist and hand exercises, you need to add in the following sets of exercises.

### Fingers apart and together

Keep your wrist in a neutral position



1. Spread your fingers apart.
2. Then move your fingers close together.

## **Week 8 to Week 12**

You need to continue your exercises as per the previous week. You may start to do gentle strengthening exercises from Week 8 and you can increase the strength gradually over the next 4 weeks.

### **Gentle strengthening exercises**

Use therapeutic putty with increasing resistance 3 times a day up to 10 minutes each time.

- Week 8 and Week 9, use yellow putty
- Week 10, use red putty
- Week 11, use green mixed with red putty or continue with red putty
- Week 12, use green putty

If you have any questions about this information, please contact your Occupational Therapist.

Your Occupational Therapist is: \_\_\_\_\_

The telephone number of Occupational Therapy Department is **01752 432220**



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