

# Thumb Flexor Tendon Repair

## Hand Therapy Patient Information

You have had a tendon/s repaired in your thumb. The repair is **very weak** and gets weaker for the first 4 weeks post operation. Therefore, a splint has been made to protect it and to prevent you from using your hand.

You **must** wear the splint **all the time**.

You will be taught special exercises to complete **hourly**. These are to help keep the tendon moving without damaging it, and to help stop it from becoming 'stuck' down.

### Rehabilitation (0-3 weeks)

- For the first few days keep your hand elevated when resting to help reduce swelling.
- **Do not** remove your splint, get it wet or place it on anything hot.
- Whilst wearing the splint you should regularly check your skin condition and ensure the splint is fitting comfortably. If you have an issue, contact your physiotherapist.
- **Do not** use your hand for **anything** other than the exercises shown to you in this booklet.
- Once your stitches have been removed (roughly 10-14 days post-op) or begin to dissolve (absorbable), you can begin scar massage. Your Physiotherapist will guide you on how to do this.
- If you have had a tendon repair that includes a stitch through your nail (see picture below), the stitch should **not be removed for 6 weeks**.



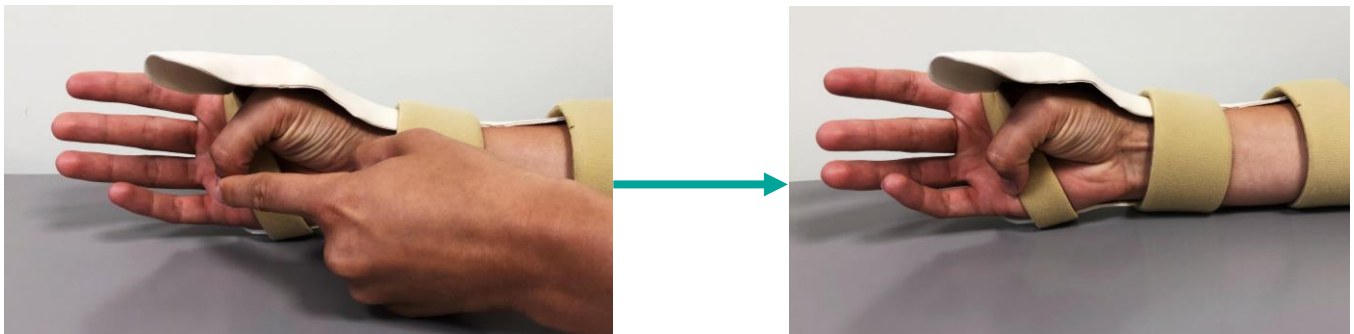


## Exercises

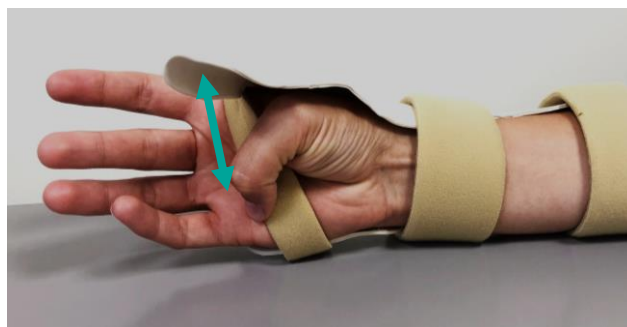
1. **Use your uninjured hand** to push the thumb into the palm of your hand. Then let go with your uninjured hand and straighten the thumb up to the splint without assistance. Repeat this 10 times. If your fingers are stiff then repeat this for all your fingers as well, 10 times.



2. **Use your uninjured hand** to push the thumb down into the palm. Then take your other hand away and count to 5 seconds whilst keeping your thumb bent. Then slowly straighten your thumb back to the splint. Repeat this 5 times.



3. Once you have completed the above first two exercises, slowly bend and straighten your thumb without assistance. Repeat this 3 times.



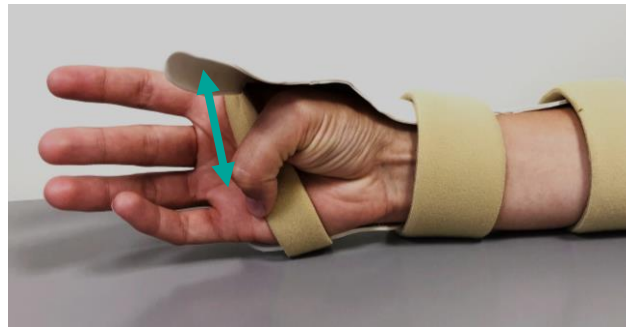


## Rehabilitation (3-6 weeks)

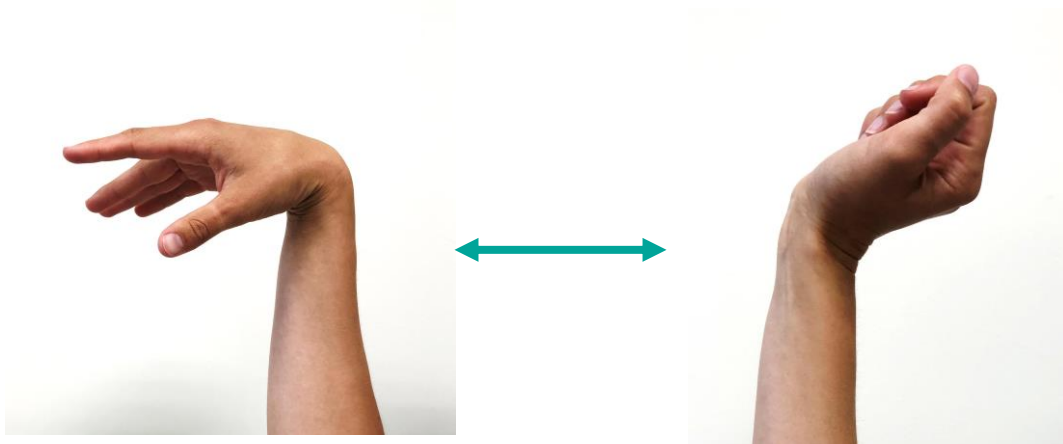
- Continue to wear your splint **all of the time**, except for the following exercises.
- Complete the previous exercises 1 & 2 (0-3 Weeks) before these exercises.
- Massage your scar regularly.
- You can now start to gently move your thumb by itself within the confines of the splint.

## Exercises

1. Slowly bend your thumb into your palm, aiming to touch the strap of the splint. Then slowly straighten it back to the splint without any help. This is the last exercise from Weeks 0-3. You must now repeat this 5 times.



2. **Only if instructed by your therapist**, rest your elbow on the table and carefully remove the splint. With a **relaxed** thumb and hand, bend your wrist forwards letting your fingers extend then bend it backwards letting your fingers and thumb curl. Repeat this 5 times.



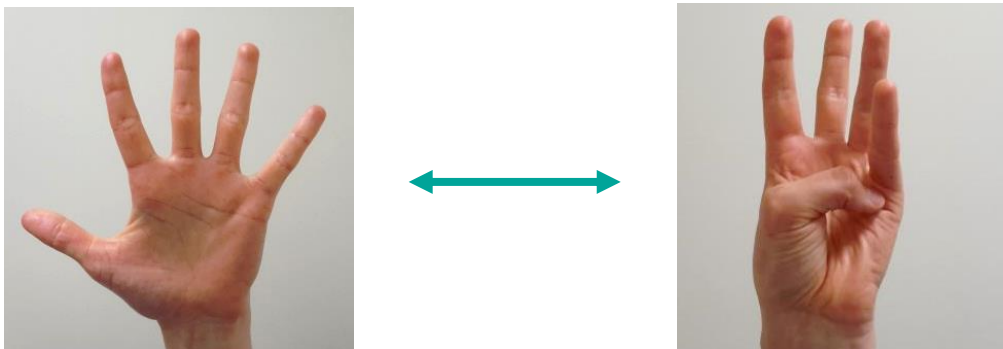
## Rehabilitation (6-8 weeks)

Your tendon is getting stronger every week. Your splint will be gradually straightened. You can wear the splint less during the day, but wear it any time you feel your hand may be 'at risk' e.g. in crowds or when sleeping.

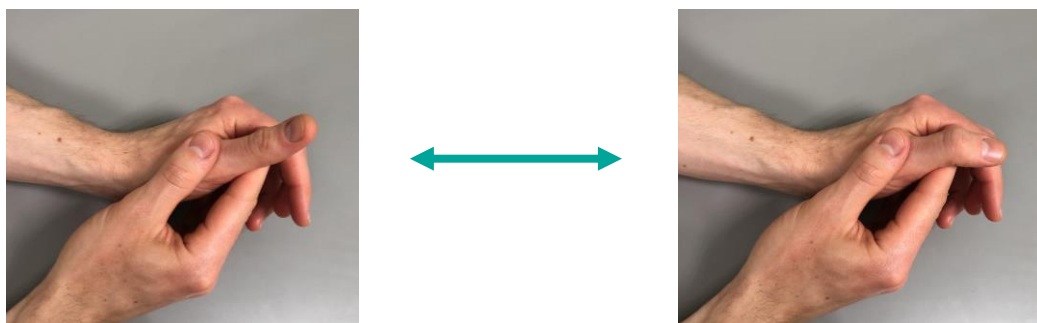
- Continue all your exercises, scar massage and use your hand within the limits set by your Hand Therapist.
- **Do not** pinch, push hard against any objects (e.g. pushing doors open, getting out of the bath and pushing out of a chair) or lift anything heavier than a bag of sugar.
- You **cannot** drive yet.

## Exercises

1. Try and take your thumb across to touch the base of your little finger. Then straighten out your thumb. Do this 10 times.



2. **Only if instructed by your therapist**, fix the thumb with your unaffected hand, leaving the end joint free to move. Slowly bend and straighten the end joint. Do this 10 times (or advised by your therapist).





## Rehabilitation (8-10 weeks)

- Your tendon is getting a **little** stronger now.
- Your Hand Therapist will teach you exercises to help build strength and increase the movement in your thumb.
- Continue your scar massage and all your exercises.
- You can consider **driving** (ensure you have appropriate movement and strength to grip and feel comfortable with your own decision that you are capable of driving safely).
- You can start doing light work e.g. writing, dusting or using a keyboard.
- **Do not** play contact sports, lift anything heavier than 3kg, complete lots of repetitive work e.g. writing for long periods.

## Rehabilitation (10-12 weeks)

Your tendon is getting stronger. But be aware, your hand and arm will be weak due to lack of use. Your therapist can teach you strengthening exercises.

You can return to **manual work**. Discuss this with your therapist.

## Rehabilitation (12+ weeks)

Check with your therapist before returning to heavy manual work, contact sports or sports that require prolonged periods of holding e.g. climbing. It is also **very important** to discuss any problems or concerns you have with your therapist.

**If you have any problems in the future, please contact your physiotherapist.  
Contact details are below.**

### Hand Therapy

Brownsword Therapies Centre (Dept. F1)  
Royal United Hospitals Bath NHS Foundation Trust  
Combe Park, Bath BA1 3NG

**01225 821241**

[www.ruh.nhs.uk](http://www.ruh.nhs.uk)

Please contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) if you require this leaflet in a different format, or would like to feedback your experience of the hospital.

Email [ruh-tr.pals@nhs.net](mailto:ruh-tr.pals@nhs.net) or telephone 01225 825656 / 826319.