

Extensor Tendon

Repair

Hand Therapy Patient Information

What is an Extensor Tendon?

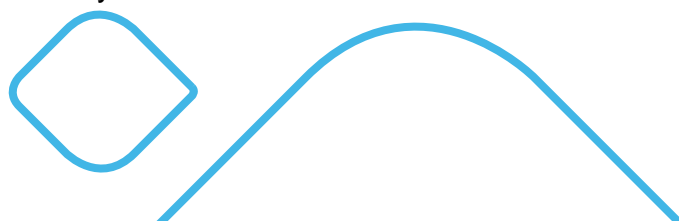
The extensor tendon works to straighten your finger, allowing you to open your hand in the action of grasping an object, as well as releasing it. You have extensor tendons to each finger. When these are injured, you will be unable to straighten your finger(s) and this normally means you will need to surgery to repair the tendon and regain that function.

Post-operation Management

You have had a tendon/s repaired in your hand/forearm. You will be seen in clinic soon after your surgery to have the wounds checked. As the tendon repair is **very weak** at the moment, your Hand Therapist will make you a splint to protect it and prevent you from using your hand.

Rehabilitation (0-3 Weeks)

- You must wear your splint all of the time, **except** for the following exercises.
- **Do not** get your splint 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 therapist.
- When at rest, keep your hand raised to help reduce swelling.
- Your Hand Therapist will teach you the exercises in this leaflet to safely move the tendon.
- You should **complete these exercises hourly**.
- **Do not** use your hand for anything other than the exercises you are taught.
- Once your stitches have dissolved or been removed (approx. 10-14 days post-operation), you can begin scar massage. Your therapist will teach you how to do this.



Exercises

Aim to do these every hour.

1. Keeping the splint on, gently curl your fingers over the edge of the splint and hold for 1-2 seconds. Then straighten your fingers up. Repeat this 10-20 times.



2. Take off your splint. **Use your uninjured hand** to support the wrist backwards (in extension - see below). Keep the fingers straight and gently bend at the knuckles **only** within the limits of pain. Aim to bend to a 45° angle. **Do not make a fist.** Then straighten the fingers. Repeat 10 times.



3. If your wound has healed, massage your scar by applying firm pressure and moving in small circles. Your Therapist will teach you how to do this. You may wish to use some aqueous/moisturising cream. Do this for 2-3 minutes every 2 hours.

If you struggle to fully straighten your fingers, (your therapist will discuss this) your therapist will consider adding an extra piece to your splint to straighten your fingers at night and intermittently during the day

Below is an image of the 'paddle' piece for the splint, if you are struggling to fully straighten the finger(s). This can be taken out in the day to complete the exercises. Follow this guide below to remove the paddle.



Unclip the paddle at the thumb and slide

Remove the paddle and begin your

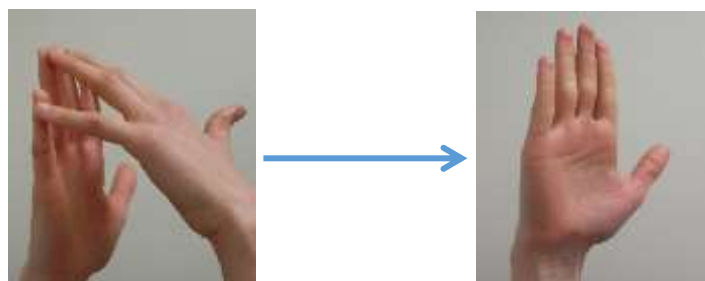
This 'paddle' must be replaced after your exercises. To do so, reverse the guide above.

Rehabilitation (3-5 Weeks)

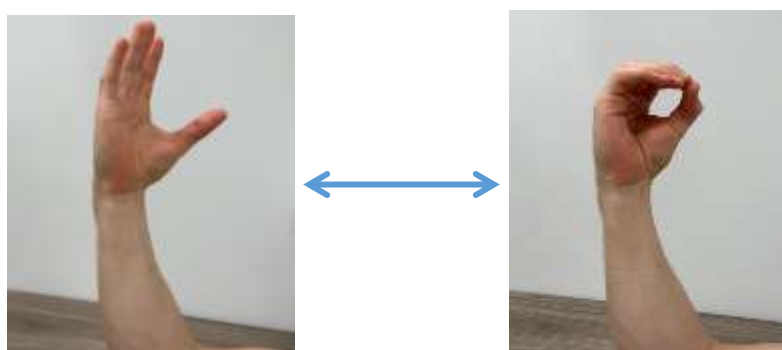
- Continue to wear your splint **all of the time**, except for your exercises.
- If advised by your therapist, you may remove your splint for careful hand hygiene only.
- Complete all of your previous exercises (Weeks 0-3) before these exercises.
- You may use your hand for light activities only – lifting nothing more than a weight of a cup of tea. No strong or sustained gripping.

Exercises

1. Using your other hand, push your fingers straight and try to keep them there. Hold for 5 seconds then relax before repeating 5 times.

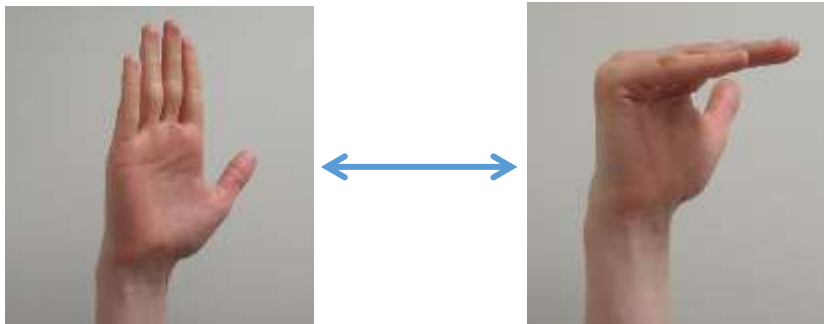


2. Straighten your fingers fully. Then make a half fist, reaching your fingers to the tip of your thumb. **Do not** strain. Work up to the feeling of tightness. You should not be making a full fist. Do this 10 times.

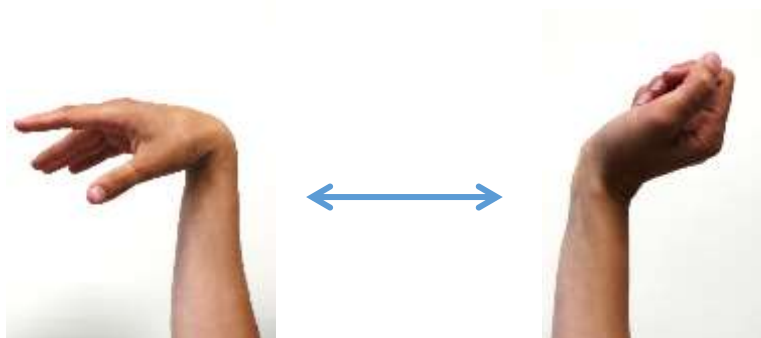


EXTENSOR TENDON REPAIR

3. This exercise replaces exercise 2 from week 0-3 (see above). **Use your uninjured hand to support the wrist backwards.** Keep the fingers straight and gently bend at the knuckles **only** within the limits of pain. Aim to bend to a 90° angle. **Do not make a fist.** Repeat this 10 times.



4. With a **relaxed thumb and fingers**, bend your wrist forwards, letting your fingers straighten, and then backwards letting your fingers curl. Do this 10 times.



Rehabilitation (5-6 weeks)

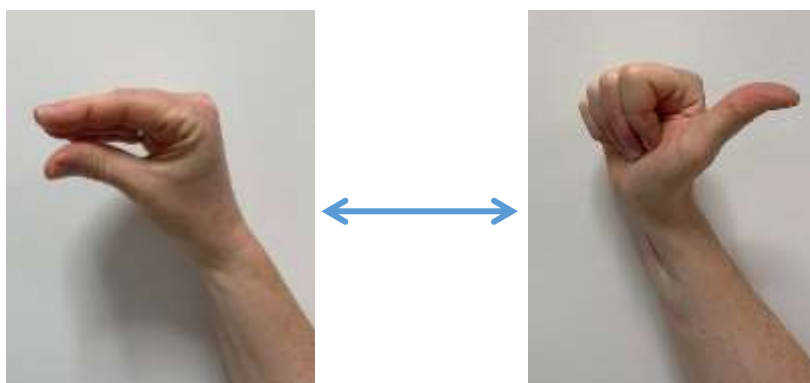
- Continue to wear your splint **all of the time**, except for your exercises.
- You can remove your splint for careful hand hygiene only.
- Complete all of your previous exercises (Weeks 0-3 & 3-5) before these exercises.

Exercises

1. Bend your wrist backwards (approximately 45 degrees) and gradually try to make a fist. **Do not force this.** Do this 10 times, repeating 5-6 times per day. Increase over the next 2-3 weeks.



2. Keeping your fingers straight, bend at the knuckles. Then bend your fingers to make a 'flat fist' so the finger tips rest against the palm. Do this 10 times.



Rehabilitation (6-8 Weeks)

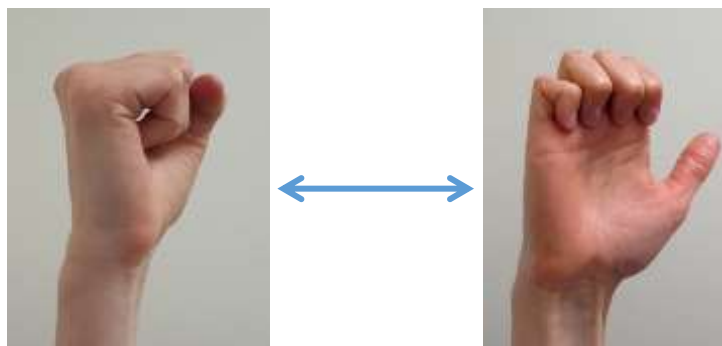
- You can wear the splint less now. Wear it at night and any time you feel your hand may be **'at risk'** e.g. in crowds.
- Continue all your exercises and scar massage
- Use your hand within the limits set by your Hand Therapist.
- **Avoid** pinching forcefully and pushing hard against any objects (e.g. pushing doors open, getting out of the bath and pushing out of a chair).
- **Do not** lift anything heavier than a bag of sugar.
- You cannot drive yet.

Exercises

1. Grasp rice gently, letting the rice cascade through your fingers. Work for 30 seconds initially and build up gradually.



2. Make a fist. Keeping the tips of the fingers bent, straighten your big knuckles so that you end up in a hook fist. Then return to a fist. Do this 10 times.



Rehabilitation (8-10 weeks)

- Your tendon is getting a **little** stronger now.
- Your Hand Therapist will teach you strengthening exercises.
- Continue your scar massage and all your exercises.
- You can **stop wearing your splint**.
- 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 or perform repetitive work e.g. writing for long periods.

Rehabilitation (10-12 weeks)

Your tendon is getting stronger. Your hand and arm will be weak due to lack of use. Your therapist will teach you exercises to help get the strength back.

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. using a hammer, climbing, etc. It is **very important** to discuss any problems or concerns you have with your therapist.

If you have any problems, please contact your therapist. Contact details are below.

Hand Therapy

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Royal United Hospitals Bath NHS Foundation Trust
Combe Park, Bath, BA1 3NG
01225 821241 | 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 or telephone 01225 825656.
