

Post-Operative Instructions for Dupuytren's Contracture Release

Purpose of surgery

The goal of the operation is to remove the 'altered' palmar fascia that is causing your finger(s) to stay flexed (bent) thereby allowing you to extend (straighten) your finger(s).

What to expect after surgery?

You will have a soft dressing that covers the wound on your palm and operative finger(s). You may have some numbness or tingling of fingers due to the local anesthetic injections used to help control post-operative pain (this should wear off within about 24 hours). After this first 24 hours, you may still experience some numbness and tingling in parts of the operative finger(s) as this surgery often requires the delicate dissection of your finger's nerves to keep them protected; and, these nerves are sensitive.

What should you do to help recover?

While we do not anticipate significant swelling following this procedure, it would be helpful to keep your hand/wrist elevated as best as you can for the first 24 hours after surgery. You can also apply an icepack or frozen vegetables to the palm side of the dressing to help keep swelling to a minimum.

To help your recovery, keep your other, non-operated fingers moving. Attempt to make a fist with your fingers and completely straighten them. Make sure you can move your thumb across your hand towards your pinky finger and fully straighten it. Repeat these motions and efforts throughout the day, especially in the first few days following surgery to keep internal scarring from becoming an issue. Your dressing, and discomfort, will limit you; but, I ask that you do the best you can.

Keep your pain under control. While I do not anticipate significant pain, I want to make sure you are comfortable. Take the prescription pain medicine as prescribed for the first day and decide the next to what extent you need it. Keeping yourself comfortable will allow you to keep your fingers moving and minimize internal scarring from the surgery.

How should you take care of your dressing/wound?

Keep the dressing, and all the skin covered, clean and dry. Once the surgical dressing is removed, keep the wound and your skin clean. Soap and water are an excellent skin cleanser, and it is OK to get everything wet in a shower with running water. Avoid immersing your wound under water until the sutures are removed. Please do not use salves like Neosporin™ or Bacitracin™ for the wound. I would prefer soap and water or peroxide; and, I want you to keep it covered with a non-adherent bandage – your wound does not need air to heal, just cleanliness. The sutures are absorbable, and should 'fall' out by about 2-3 weeks and sometimes earlier.

How should my hand respond to the surgery?

As I probably explained to you in the office, the speed and extent of your recovery is somewhat variable. You should notice a definite improvement in your ability to extend (straighten) your finger. You will also notice that it will be difficult to flex (bend) your finger due to the surgery. These are initial responses, and all should improve with time and therapy (see below).

What should concern you?

Please refer to our website (www.HandCenterGA.com) for helping you to understand our general concerns following any operation. A 'Dupuytren's flare' is a unique, and rare, complication of this operation. Your wound will become red and inflamed and look like an infection. It is typically resolved with special anti-inflammatory medication and therapy. Should you have any concerns, I want you to call us at 404-255-0226.

When should you come in for your first Post-operative visit?

Your first visit will be within 2-3 days of the operation. This is to remove drains from your wound designed to limit internal bleeding within the finger and palm that could lead to significant scarring. That visit should be arranged during your pre-operative appointment. If not, call 404-255-0226 to make that appointment.

Do you need therapy?

Your optimal recovery will depend upon a formal, supervised therapy program. I will refer you to our therapists, or if more convenient, to a qualified therapist near you. You will probably continue therapy for approximately 2-3 months.

What activities can you do?

You can do anything that does not hurt with some exception. Avoid or limit repetitive activities like typing for about a week for 2-3 weeks to keep from creating swelling that will prolong discomfort and limit finger flexibility. Limit yourself to lifting with the operative hand for a few days or so until it becomes more comfortable. Everyone's pain threshold is different, but a reasonable guideline is limit yourself to about 1-2 pounds with the operative hand.