

Post-Operative Instructions for Flexor Tendon Repair

Purpose of surgery

The goal of the operation is to repair or reattach lacerated or detached flexor tendons. The flexor tendons (muscles) are responsible for flexing (bending) your fingers.

What to expect after surgery?

You will have a firm splint covering your forearm and the back of your hand and fingers holding your fingers flexed (bent). All your fingers will be included in the splint for any finger flexor tendon repair; and, only your thumb will be included in the splint for a thumb flexor tendon repair. You will be able to see the tips of your fingers/thumb to insure they are getting good circulation. The palm side of your fingers/thumb will be protected by a soft padding that they will be resting on while the plaster will keep your fingers bent from the nail side. You may have some numbness or tingling of fingers/thumb 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)/thumb if you also had a nerve repair.

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 you can for the first 24 hours after surgery. The thickness of the dressing will prevent the effective placement of a cold-pack.

Please do not move your fingers, even if they were not operated on.

This is to help prevent the repair/reattachment from rupturing (see below).

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?

Do not remove the dressing/splint. Once the surgical dressing is replaced by us with a therapeutic splint, follow the therapist's specific directions regarding skin care. In general, keep the wound and your skin clean. Soap and water is an excellent skin cleanser. 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. As you start therapy, you will notice that you will have the ability to flex your fingers – but in a very limited way. **You must follow the therapist's instructions carefully with regards to motion so as to avoid rupturing the repair.** You will not be able to appreciate the success of the tendon repair for several weeks.

What should concern you?

Please refer to our website (www.HandCenterGA.com) for helping you to understand our general concerns following any operation. 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 4-7 days of the operation. The splint/dressing will be taken down, and you will start therapy. The therapist will replace your operative splint with a plastic molded splint (orthosis) that you will wear for the next few weeks. 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.

What activities can you do?

I will not allow you any use of the operative hand for several weeks depending upon your formal therapy protocol.