

Post-Operative Instructions for Trigger Finger/Thumb Release

Purpose of surgery

The purpose of your surgery is to relieve you of the finger(s) which are painful and/or getting stuck in position.

What to expect after surgery?

You will have a soft dressing that covers your hand and part of the finger that was released. You can expect your operative finger, and perhaps its neighbors, to be numb from the local anesthetic for about 24 hours.

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 elevated as best 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 help keep swelling to a minimum.

To help your recovery, keep your fingers moving. Make sure you can make a fist with your fingers and completely straighten them. Make sure you can move and fully bend your thumb across your hand towards your pinky finger and fully straighten it. You may find this difficult to complete, or you may find that your operative finger does not fully flex – do not be discouraged as this is common in the initial days following any operation that involves tendons. Repeat these motions and efforts throughout the day, especially in the first few days following surgery to keep internal scarring from becoming an issue.

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?

Keep the dressing, and all the skin covered, clean and dry for about 2 days. Afterwards, you may remove the dressing yourself prior to coming in for your first post-operative visit. The wound is covered by a non-adherent patch, followed by gauze, and finally a wrap.

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 skin looks well healed. 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 your hand respond to the surgery?

As I probably explained to you in the office, you can expect your finger or thumb to be uncomfortable for anywhere from 1 to 3 or so weeks and should diminish over that time. This does not mean you will not be able to use your hand, just that it will be sore. Within that time frame, it should become apparent that the 'triggering' is gone.

What should concern you?

Please refer to our website (www.HandCenterGA.com) for helping you to understand our general concerns following any operation. Any triggering that persists after surgery should be brought to my attention. When it does happen, it is usually from swelling, especially in the setting of tendon degeneration; but, it could mean that there is another site of triggering within the finger. Should you have any concerns, please call me at 404-255-0226.

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

Your first visit will be within 7-10 days of the operation. That visit should be arranged during your pre-operative appointment. If not, call 404-255-0226 to make that appointment. You can expect that your sutures will be removed on that first visit.

Do you need therapy?

Most people do not require therapy to help recover from trigger finger release. On the other hand, I will offer it if it seems that your recovery is not progressing quickly. I am also likely to recommend therapy if you had several fingers decompressed during the same operation as this usually results in some added discomfort and swelling.

What activities can you do?

You can do anything that does not hurt. 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 to limit yourself to about 1-2 pounds with the operative hand.