Central slip extensor tendon injury

Central slip injury
The extensor tendons in your finger are very important. They attach the muscles to the bone and allow you to straighten your middle joint of your finger.

Recovery
Your damaged tendon has been repaired. It will take around 12 weeks for it to heal fully. During this time, there is a risk that the tendon could rupture (break) and your fingers could become stiff. To reduce the risk of rupture you will be given a thermoplastic splint to protect the tendon. You should wear your splint all the time, until your hand therapist agrees that you can remove it.

Recovery guidelines
These are guidelines only. Your hand therapist will help and advise you at every stage of your recovery.

Following your operation (rest and elevation in bandage)

First five days
Do not move your finger. Your wound will be checked, and you will be given a thermoplastic splint. Exercises for your fingers may be advised by your hand therapist. Straighten and bend the tip of your operated finger as instructed by your therapist. Bend and straighten your wrist, thumb and other fingers regularly to prevent stiffness.

Ten to 14 days
Your stitches will be removed, and with advice from your therapist you can start to massage your scar. You can also begin to carefully wash the rest of your hand.

Three weeks
You will be given more exercises for your finger. Your splint still needs to be worn at night. You will be provided with a spring loaded or second thermoplastic splint which should be worn during the day. You will be advised on exercises within your splint.

Six weeks
You can begin to use your hand for light function out of splints, such as eating, dressing and writing. No heavy or resisted use of the hand. The splint must be used for protection when at risk of injury, for example when sleeping, travelling, or in crowded places. Your hand therapist will advise when you can return to work for light duties.

Eight weeks
At this stage you should be able to discard the splint and increase functional use of your hand. You can return to work and driving if safe as discussed with your therapist. No heavy duties or lifting.
Ten weeks
Return to manual work.

12 weeks
Return to contact sports.

Exercise guidelines
The repaired tendons may stick to tissue in the hand as they heal. It’s important to exercise your fingers in a controlled way to prevent this happening. You will be shown specific exercises to help with your recovery, and given a personalised exercise programme to complete.

Don’t use your injured finger for anything but the exercises instructed by your therapist.

Exercises
1. Actively bend your thumb and other fingers towards the palm and then straighten again.
2. Lift your arm above your head regularly to keep your shoulder moving.
3. Bend and straighten your elbow regularly to keep your elbow moving.
4. With your forearm tucked in by your side and the elbow bent, turn your palm up towards the ceiling and then down towards the floor, keeping the elbow still. Repeat times every hour.

Splint care
Your splint should be worn at all times (night and day) to protect your repaired tendon. When bathing or showering, place a plastic bag over the splint to keep it dry.

If you have any problems with the splint, or any other questions or concerns, please contact the hand therapy department.

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