

Patient information factsheet

Central slip extensor tendon injury

We have given you this factsheet because you have sustained a central slip extensor tendon injury. It explains what extensor tendons are and how to care for your finger while it recovers. We hope it will help to answer some of the questions you may have. If you have any further questions or concerns, please speak to a member of our team.

What are extensor tendons?

Tendons are tough cords of tissue that connect muscles to bones.

Extensor tendons run from your forearm across the back of your hand to your fingers and thumb, allowing you to straighten your fingers and thumb.

A central slip is a section of an extensor tendon which straightens the middle joint of your finger.

Recovery

Your damaged tendon has been repaired. It will take about 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 this risk, we will make you a thermoplastic splint to protect the tendon. You should wear your splint all the time, until we agree that you can remove it.

Recovery guidelines

These are guidelines only. We will help and advise you at every stage of your recovery.

After your operation

First five days

Do not bend your finger until we instruct you to do so. We will give you specific exercises to practise, including:

- straightening and bending your finger tip joint while keeping the middle joint of your finger straight within the splint that we have made for you
- bending your wrist backwards and forwards
- bending and straightening your thumb and fingers

You should complete these exercises every two hours during the day.

A nurse will check your wound and we will give you a thermoplastic splint.

Ten to fourteen days

A nurse will remove your stitches. With our advice, you can start to massage your scar. You can also begin to carefully wash the rest of your hand.

Patient information factsheet

Three to four weeks

We will give you more exercises for your finger. You will still need to wear your splint at night.

We will provide you with a spring-loaded or second thermoplastic splint. During your appointment, we will explain whether you will need to wear it during the day or just when exercising. We will also advise you on exercises that you can do wearing your splint.

Six weeks

You can begin to use your hand for light function out of splints, such as eating, dressing and writing. Do not use your hand to push or lift heavy objects.

You must wear the splint for protection when you are at risk of injury, for example, when you are sleeping, travelling, or in crowded places. We 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). Do not take on any heavy duties or lifting.

Ten weeks

You can return to manual work.

Twelve weeks

You can return to contact sports.

Exercise guidelines

The repaired tendons may stick to tissue in your hand as they heal. It's important to exercise your fingers in a controlled way to prevent this happening. We will show you specific exercises to help with your recovery, and give you a personalised exercise programme to complete.

Don't use your injured finger for anything except the exercises we instruct you to do.

Exercises

1. Actively bend your thumb and other fingers towards your 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 your elbow bent, turn your palm up towards the ceiling and then down towards the floor, keeping your elbow still.

Repeat ____ times every hour.

Splint care

As instructed, you must wear your splint 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.

Contact us

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

Therapist: _____

Date: _____

Patient information factsheet

Hand therapy team
Therapy outpatients
B level
West Wing
Southampton General Hospital
Tremona Road
Southampton
SO16 6YD

Telephone: **023 8120 6459**

For a translation of this document, or a version in another format such as easy read, large print, Braille or audio, please telephone **0800 484 0135** or email **patientsupporthub@uhs.nhs.uk**

For help preparing for your visit, arranging an interpreter or accessing the hospital, please visit **www.uhs.nhs.uk/additionalsupport**