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 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 the risk of rupture we will make you a thermo-plastic 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.

After your operation (rest and elevation in bandage)

First five days
Do not bend your finger before you are instructed to do so.

Your therapist will give you specific exercises to practise, including:
• straightening and bending your finger tip joint while the the middle joint of your finger is kept straight within the splint that has been made for you
• bending your wrist backwards and forwards
• bending and straightening your thumb and fingers

These exercises should be completed every two hours during the day.

Your wound will be checked, and you will be given a thermoplastic splint.

Ten to fourteen 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 to four weeks
You will be given more exercises for your finger. You will still need to wear your splint at night.

You will be provided with a spring-loaded or second thermoplastic splint. During your appointment, your therapist will explain whether you will need to wear it during the day or just as a splint to help you exercising. You will also be advised 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.

The splint must be worn 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. 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 the hand as they heal. It’s important to exercise your fingers in a controlled way to prevent this happening. Your therapist 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 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.

Therapist: Date:

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