

Patient information factsheet

Extensor tendon repair (zones 4 to 7) Norwich regime or controlled active motion regime

We have given you this factsheet because you have had an operation called an extensor tendon repair to repair damaged tendons in your hand. As part of your recovery process, you will need to follow a rehabilitation programme known as the 'Norwich regime' or 'controlled active motion regime'.

This factsheet explains what the rehabilitation programme is and what it involves so that you know how to care for your hand 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 contact us using the details at the end of this factsheet.

What are extensor tendons?

Tendons are tough cords of tissue that connect muscles to bones. Extensor tendons are tendons that run from the forearm across the back of your hand to your fingers and thumb.

Extensor tendon injuries are classified into eight different zones. The extensor tendon injury you sustained was between zones 4 and 7 of your hand. The tendons in these zones help you to lift your fingers up and move your wrist backwards. We will explain the different extensor zones to you in more detail at your first hand therapy appointment (this will be three to five days after your operation).

What is the Norwich (or controlled active motion) regime?

On average, repaired tendons take up to 12 weeks to regain their previous strength. During this time, you will need to follow a staged rehabilitation programme, known as the Norwich (or controlled active motion) regime, to ensure that your tendons have the best chance of recovery.

The rehabilitation programme will help:

- you to regain movement in your hand without putting strain on your repaired tendons
- to reduce the risk of your tendons rupturing (breaking)

We have included the information below as a guideline only. We will help and advise you at every stage of your recovery.

Splint

We will give you a thermoplastic splint to wear for the first six weeks after your procedure to help protect the tendon repair. This is because the repair is very delicate and can be easily undone. The splint will look very similar to the one in the image on the right. You will need to wear this splint for 24 hours a day.



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It is important that you keep the splint away from all heat sources (for example, hot water, hand dryers, radiators, sunny cars or windowsills) as it can change shape.

If your splint is uncomfortable or you notice any red marks on your skin from wearing the splint, contact your hand therapist as soon as possible so we can alter your splint.

Things to remember

- Do not remove your splint.
- Do not get your splint or hand wet (when bathing or showering, place a plastic bag over the splint to keep it dry).

Wound

Keep your dressings clean and dry.

If your stitches are non-dissolvable, a nurse will need to remove these for you 10 to 14 days after your operation. An appointment to remove the stitches will usually be arranged for you before you leave hospital.

If you have not been given an appointment date, please contact our outpatient administration centre on **023 8120 6218** (Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm and Saturday, 8am to 4.30pm).

Go to your nearest urgent treatment centre or emergency department immediately if your wound becomes:

- hot, swollen or red
- more painful than usual

This could be a sign of infection.

Swelling

To help reduce swelling in your hand, you should:

- raise your hand above the level of your heart (this helps gravity to drain the fluid away from your hand)
- move your elbow and shoulder (this will also help to prevent any stiffness in these joints)

Exercises

Your repaired tendons may stick to tissue in your hand as they heal so it's important to exercise your fingers in a controlled way to prevent this from happening.

During your hand therapy appointment, we will show you a number of exercises that you will need to do to help your tendons recover safely. We have included the exercises on the next page as a guide for you to refer to.

Things to remember

- Do not use your injured hand for anything but the exercises we instruct you to do.
- Do not move your wrist until we advise you to do so.

Before you begin any of the exercises, you will need to gently lift and fold back the two splint straps covering your fingers so that your fingers are free.

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Exercise 1

Lift your fingers away from the splint, keeping your fingers straight. Hold this position for a few seconds.

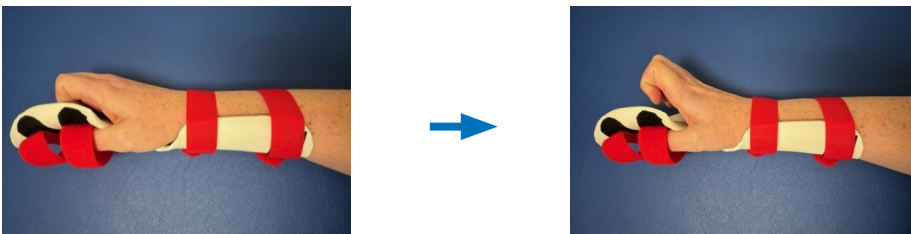


Repeat _____ times every hour.

Exercise 2

Bend the first two joints of your fingers into a claw shape, keeping your big knuckles straight.

Bend your big knuckles backwards, lifting the tips of your fingers away from the splint.

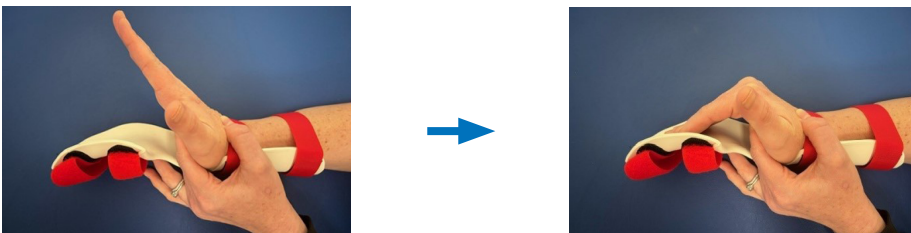


Repeat _____ times every hour.

Exercise 3

Using your other hand for support, gently move your wrist backwards, keeping your fingers straight.

Bend your big knuckles so that the tips of your fingers touch the splint and then lift off again.



Repeat _____ times every hour.

Daily activities and sport

You should be able to start using your hand for light activities around four to six weeks after your operation. We will advise you when it is safe for you to start using your hand.

Do not use your hand for heavy tasks (for example, gardening, DIY or lifting heavy objects) for the first eight weeks after your operation.

Do not play any contact sports for 10 to 12 weeks.

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From week eight, we will start to introduce grip strengthening exercises into your rehabilitation programme. We will advise you on these exercises, and any further rehabilitation steps, at your hand therapy appointments.

Work

When you can safely return to work will vary depending on your individual circumstances. However, typically, desk-based work can be restarted from around four to six weeks and more physical work can be restarted from around eight to 12 weeks. We will discuss this with you in more detail at your hand therapy appointments.

Driving

We recommend that you do not drive for a minimum of eight weeks after your extensor tendon repair.

After eight weeks, you can resume driving as long as you are able to comfortably grip the steering wheel, and you feel safe to drive.

If you feel well enough to drive before eight weeks, we recommend contacting your insurance company for advice first as you will not be insured to drive while wearing a splint.

Contact us

If you have any further questions or concerns, please contact us.

Hand therapy team

Telephone: **023 8120 6459** (Monday to Friday, 8am to 5pm)

Useful links

The British Society for Surgery of the Hand (BSSH)

www.bssh.ac.uk/patients/conditions/27/extensor_tendon_injury

If you are a patient at one of our hospitals and need this document translated, or in another format such as easy read, large print, Braille or audio, please telephone **0800 484 0135** or email **PFSH@uhs.nhs.uk**

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

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