

Patient information factsheet

Wrist extensor tendon injury

We have given you this factsheet because you have sustained a wrist extensor tendon injury. It explains what wrist extensor tendons are and how to care for your wrist 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.

Wrist 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 wrist.

Recovery

You have had an operation to repair your damaged tendons. It will take around 12 weeks for them to heal fully. During this time, there is a risk that the tendons could rupture (break) and your wrist and fingers could become stiff. To reduce this risk, we will give you a thermoplastic splint to protect the tendons. 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.

Days after operation

First five days

Do not move your wrist. A nurse will check your wound and we will give you a thermoplastic splint. We will also give you specific exercises to practise, including straightening and bending your fingers and your thumb regularly.

Ten to fourteen days

A nurse will check your wound and remove your stitches. With our advice, you can start to massage your scar. You can also begin to carefully wash your hand.

Four weeks

We will give you more exercises for your fingers and wrist. You can remove the splint during these exercises.

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. Do not take on any heavy duties or lifting.

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Ten weeks

You can return to manual work and driving (if safe).

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 and wrist in a controlled way to prevent this happening. We will give you a personalised exercise programme to help with your recovery.

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

Don't move your wrist until we advise you to do so.

Exercises

1. Actively bend your thumb and 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.

Repeat _____ times every hour.

Splint care

As instructed, you must wear your splint at all times (night and day) to protect your repaired tendons. 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: _____

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