



Hand therapy advice following trapeziectomy surgery for thumb base arthritis

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Next review: June 2025
Version 3

> About this leaflet

This leaflet provides you with some useful advice and guidance on what to do after your trapeziectomy surgery for your thumb base arthritis. All information provided in this booklet is for guidance only. It does not replace any information or advice we may give you in person.

> Hand therapy advice

Hand therapy is vital to help you regain function of your hand. You will be given an appointment to attend the clinic 10-16 days after your surgery. At this appointment your dressing will be removed by a nurse and reapplied. The hand therapist will review your hand and give you an exercise programme to begin moving your hand. You will also be provided with a splint.

Do **not**:

- Move your thumb across your palm for the first 4 weeks after your operation.

Advice on your splint:

- It is to be worn all day and night, except for performing hand hygiene and the exercises detailed in this booklet.
- When the splint is removed for hand hygiene and exercises, please do not let your thumb come across the palm of your hand
- You must monitor your hand for changes in colour or sensation when wearing the splint. If this happens, try loosening off the Velcro straps. If this doesn't work, stop using your splint and contact your hand therapist.
- Remember to bring your splint with you to each hand therapy appointment.

Scar care:

Once the stitches have been removed and your scar has healed you can start massaging the area to reduce any tightness and thickening. Use a non-perfumed cream such as E45 or Nivea and rub in a circular motion over the scar. Do this for about 5 minutes and aim for 5 times each day. It is the massage of the underlying scar tissue which reduces the scarring not the cream itself. Once your wound has healed and the stitches have been removed, you can bathe or shower as normal, but please do not allow the thumb to come across the palm of your hand.





You will be referred to your local hospital or health centre for ongoing hand therapy. If you do not hear from them, or you have any questions or concerns regarding your splint or physiotherapy exercises, please contact the Rehabilitation Department at the Golden Jubilee University National University Hospital (GJUNH) on 0141 951 5121 and ask for Physiotherapy.

General advice

- You may need to take simple painkillers like paracetamol and ibuprofen to help manage the pain.
- Returning to work will depend on your occupation and you should discuss this with your surgeon. As a general guide, you should expect to return to work:
 - 4 to 6 weeks for supervisory or managerial work.
 - 6 to 12 weeks for light manual work (e.g. clerical).
 - 12 to 16 weeks for medium manual work (e.g. nursing).
 - 4 to 6 months for heavy manual work (e.g. labourer).
- It will be at least 8-12 weeks before you can consider driving. You may start driving again when you have regained a full range of finger movements and have the power to control a motor vehicle.

Hand therapy exercises

Perform the full set of exercises between 4 and 6 times a day.

		Exercise 1: Do this with your splint on . Spread your fingers apart as wide as you can and then bring them back together. Repeat 10 times.
		Exercise 2: Do this with your splint on . Bend the tip of your thumb as much as able, then straighten it. Repeat 10 times.





Exercise 3:

Do this with your splint **off** (making sure to keep your thumb away from the palm of your hand).

Resting your forearm on a table or work-surface, slowly lift your wrist upwards as far as able, then relax downwards.

Repeat **10** times.

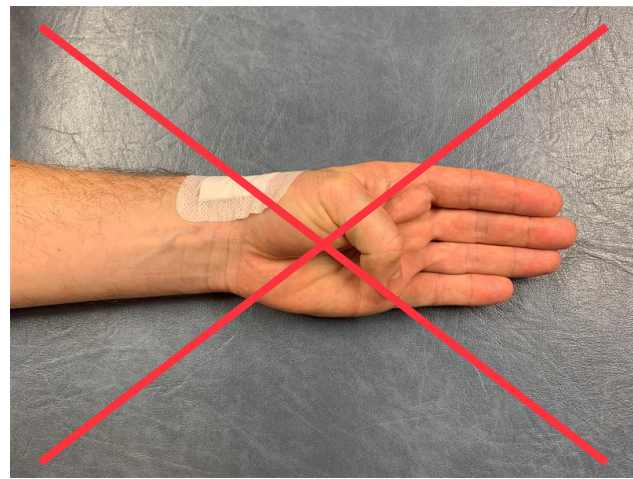


Exercise 4:

Do this with your splint **off**.

Placing your palm face down on a table or work-surface, slide your thumb outwards, away from your hand as far as able. Relax back to your starting point.

Repeat **10** times.



Do not move your thumb across the palm of your hand for the first 4 weeks after surgery.

Contact

If you have any questions or concerns, please email handsurgery@gjnh.scot.nhs.uk or contact the orthopaedic clinic during office hours on 0141 951 5553. For out of hours, you should contact the Senior Nurse via the switchboard on 0141 951 5000.



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