

# Advice and exercises after losing part/ all of your finger or thumb

## Occupational Therapy

Information for Patients

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### About your surgery

After an accident or trauma to your finger or thumb, you have had part or all your finger or thumb removed (amputation). You have now had surgery to 'tidy up' and allow the thumb or finger to heal.

The operation is usually done under local anesthetic if you are an adult (awake) and general anesthetic if you are a child (asleep). It is done as a day case so you will not usually stay in hospital overnight.

Your finger will have a dressing on from your operation and it will have stitches which may or may not need to be removed. You will be given instructions about how to look after your finger or thumb before you are discharged from hospital. You will usually need to visit to your GP's nurse.

### After your surgery

Healing should take about 2 weeks and you should be able to return to work within a few days, as long as your dressings can be kept clean and dry and your employer agrees.

Some patients who have lost the tip of a finger or thumb in an injury can be treated with dressings alone rather than an operation. This depends on how bad the injury was and your personal situation. This type of treatment can take a little longer to fully heal and will need dressing changes with your GP's nurse every week until healed. You will also have follow up therapy sessions to ensure your finger or thumb is able to be used for everyday tasks. These will be arranged in line with your progress/ healing.

**Health information and support is available at [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)  
or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice**

Visit [www.leicestershospitals.nhs.uk](http://www.leicestershospitals.nhs.uk) for maps and information about visiting Leicester's Hospitals  
To give feedback about this information sheet, contact [InformationForPatients@uhl-tr.nhs.uk](mailto:InformationForPatients@uhl-tr.nhs.uk)

## How to maintain or regain the movement in your finger/thumb

### Looking after your wound

You may have stitches which will be in for 7 to 10 days or they may be dissolvable. Although your stitches are in place it is important you move and use your injured hand. You should be careful not to wet the wound.

### Raising your hand

You may find your hand/finger is swollen after surgery. This is a normal reaction.

- To help reduce swelling you should raise (elevate) your hand above the level of your heart at all times (except when using it for activities) until the swelling reduces.
- When you are resting you should keep your hand raised on pillows, or if you are in hospital, a sling.

### Exercises

- It is very important you do exercises regularly as they reduce swelling and help blood flow which speeds up healing and prevents joint stiffness and stop muscles, tendons, ligaments or skin becoming tight (contractures).
- Try to do your exercises with your hand raised
- Your therapist will advise you on your specific exercises dependent on your injury
- You may find your hand stiffens up between exercise sessions and is stiff in the mornings. Do not worry, this is common and the stiffness should ease with exercise.

### Hand Exercises

**Do the following exercises 10 times every 2 hours**

1. Keeping your fingers straight, bend and then straighten at the knuckles.



2. Keeping the knuckles straight, bend and straighten the end and middle joints of the fingers



3. Make a fist then straighten the fingers.



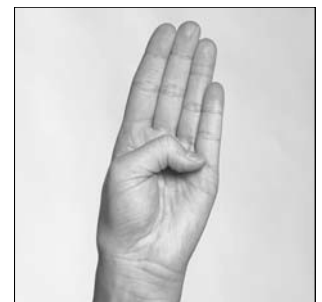
4. Keeping your fingers straight, spread the fingers and thumb apart, then bring them back together.



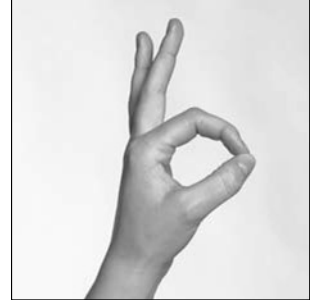
5. Bend and straighten the tip of the thumb/finger



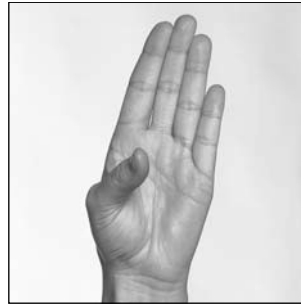
6. Reach with the thumb across the palm and then stretch it out to the side



7. Touch your thumb to each finger tip in turn



8. Circle your thumb in both directions



## Using your hand

Use your hand as normally as possible following your injury. It is easy to stop using your finger without noticing, so think of how you would normally use it. Start off with light, achievable activities, such as washing dishes, eating with cutlery or typing and progress onto heavier ones as you improve.



## Sensitivity

Sometimes, after this injury, your finger may become sensitive. This is known as **hypersensitive**. These symptoms can be improved (**desensitized**). At first, the treatment will be uncomfortable, but in time you should find this will become easier.

The following exercises can be uncomfortable at first. It may take several sessions until you notice the improvement but it will improve if done regularly. In rare cases, things may not improve and you may want to contact your GP. More information can be found in [Treating sensitivity in hand scars](#) (1165) available on Your Health

[yourhealth.leicestershospitals.nhs.uk/](http://yourhealth.leicestershospitals.nhs.uk/)

## Exercises to help with sensitivity

The following advice is to be carried out **after the wound is closed and dry.**

Do the following 4 to 6 times a day:

### 1. Massage

Using a perfume free moisturiser, such as E-45, massage firmly over and around the sensitive area in circular movements. Continue for 5 minutes.

You may want to begin away from the sensitive area and gradually move towards the area that is sensitive.



### 2. Material massage

Many materials may cause uncomfortable sensations when rubbed onto the affected area, such as cotton wool, towels, velcro etc.

Rub the sensitive area with a texture that does not irritate you too much, doing small circles over it for 2 to 3 minutes.

As this becomes easier, move onto materials which are more irritating.



### 3. Immersion massage

Fill a bowl with fine materials that are just bearable to touch, such as uncooked rice, lentils and beads. Then dip your injured hand into it, moving it in small circles for 2 to 3 minutes.

Gradually move onto more uncomfortable materials as you improve.



### 4. Tapping (percussion)

Gently tap the affected finger onto a table. As this becomes more comfortable, try tapping the finger against different surfaces and gradually increasing the pressure as you find it easier.



## Contact details

If you have any problems after discharge from hospital you can contact the following for advice:

Occupational Therapy on 0116 258 6826

The Burns and Plastics Dressing Clinic on 0116 258 5328

Your family GP

Name of Occupational Therapist

Telephone Number

اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات کسی اور زبان میں درکار ہیں، تو براہ کرم مندرجہ ذیل نمبر پر ٹیلی فون کریں۔  
على هذه المعلومات بلغة أخرى، الرجاء الاتصال على رقم الهاتف الذي يظهر في الأسفل

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Aby uzyskać informacje w innym języku, proszę zadzwonić pod podany niżej numer telefonu

Previous reference:

If you would like this information in another language or format such as EasyRead or Braille, please telephone 0116 250 2959 or email [equality@uhl-tr.nhs.uk](mailto:equality@uhl-tr.nhs.uk)