

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

## Hands Burns and Plastics Therapy

Information for Patients

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### About your surgery

You have had part of or all your finger or thumb removed (amputation). This is after an accident or trauma to your finger or thumb. You have now had surgery to 'tidy up' and allow the thumb or finger to heal.

Your finger will have a dressing on from your operation. 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. You should be able to return to work within a few days. This is as long as your dressings can be kept clean and dry. Speak with your employer about this.

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.

You will need dressing changes every week until healed. You will also have follow up therapy sessions to make sure your finger or thumb can be used for everyday tasks. We will arrange this in line with your progress and healing.

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

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To give feedback about this information sheet, contact [InformationForPatients@uhl-tr.nhs.uk](mailto:InformationForPatients@uhl-tr.nhs.uk)

## How do I keep or regain the movement in my finger or thumb?

### Looking after your wound:

- You may have stitches for 7 to 10 days or they may dissolve by themselves. We will let you know.
- Even with the stitches in place you must move and use your injured hand.
- Do not wet the wound.

### Raising your hand:

Your hand or finger might be swollen after surgery. This is a normal.



- 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). Do this until the swelling reduces.
- When you are resting you should keep your hand raised on pillows. If you are in hospital you should use a sling.






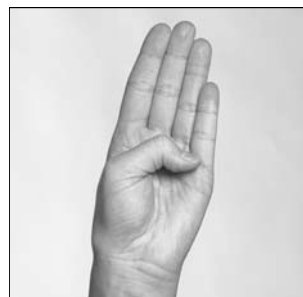
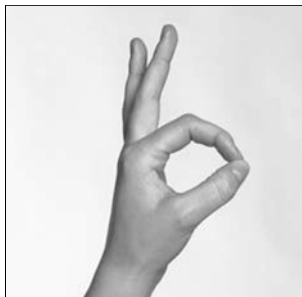


### Exercises:

- It is very important you do exercises regularly to reduce swelling and help blood flow. This speeds up healing and stops joint stiffness. It also stops 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 based on your injury.
- You may find your hand stiffens up between exercise sessions and is stiff in the mornings. Do not worry. This is normal 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 to form a hook.	

3.	Make a fist, then straighten the fingers.		
4.	Keep your fingers straight. Spread the fingers and thumb apart. Then bring them back together.		
5.	Bend and straighten the tip of the thumb or 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 after your injury. It is easy to stop using your finger without noticing. Think of how you would normally use it. Start off with light, achievable activities, like washing dishes, eating with cutlery or typing. Try other activities as you get better.



## Sensitivity

After this injury your finger can become sensitive. This is known as **hypersensitive**. These symptoms can be improved (**desensitized**).

The next exercises can be uncomfortable at first. It can take you many sessions before you see any progress. But your hand will improve if done regularly. In rare cases, things may not improve and you may want to contact your GP.

## 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:

### Massage

1. Using a perfume free moisturizer (like the E45 cream), massage over and around the sensitive area in circular movements.
2. Continue for 5 minutes.
3. You may want to begin away from the sensitive area and slowly move towards the area that is sensitive.



### Material massage

Using various different materials and textures, work out the order which causes you the least and the most discomfort against your scar. These materials can be wool, velco, towel.

1. Pick a material that does not irritate you too much.
2. Rub this material in small circles over the scar/stump for 2 to 3 minutes.
3. As this becomes easier, move onto materials which are more irritating.



## Immersion massage

1. Fill a bowl with fine materials that are just bearable to touch. This can be uncooked rice, lentils and beads.
2. Dip your injured hand into it.
3. Move it in small circles for 2 to 3 minutes.
4. Slowly move onto more uncomfortable materials as you improve.



## Tapping (percussion)

1. Gently tap the affected finger onto a table.
2. As this becomes more comfortable, try tapping the finger against different surfaces.
3. Slowly increase 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:

- Your surgical team
- Your family GP
- Your therapist

Name of Therapist: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

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