

# How will my hand injury be treated?

Department of Plastic Surgery

Information for Patients

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## Why have I been given this leaflet?

You have been given this leaflet because you have damaged your hand. Your hand may have been stitched or given a dressing or splint when you first came to the Emergency Department. This leaflet is designed to give you information about what will happen next with your hand injury.

## How should I care for my hand in the meantime?

Keep the dressing clean and dry so that you reduce the risk of the wound getting infected. You can put a plastic bag over it in the shower. **If you have been given antibiotic tablets, it is important that you take the whole course as instructed, even if you think the wound is healing well.**

## What should I be aware of with my hand?

If you develop any of the symptoms below, you should seek urgent medical advice by calling 111, or going to the Emergency Department:

- Swollen
- Red
- Increasingly painful
- Warm to touch
- Nasty smell
- If your hand is bleeding a lot, you should apply pressure to the area and come to the Emergency Department.

**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 is my hand injury going to be managed?

Depending on the type and how severe the injury is, hand injuries can be managed in various ways. The healthcare practitioner who saw your injury first should have talked to you about the options and the plan for your care. This leaflet briefly covers all the different ways of dealing with hand injuries so please take note of the section that is relevant to you.

After a hand injury 1 or more of the options listed below may happen:

1. Your hand injury may need an operation to explore the wound, repair any injured structures (such as tendons or nerves), or fix a broken bone.
2. You may need an outpatient hospital appointment with a plastic surgeon to check how your hand is healing or one of the nurses in Burns and Plastics Dressing Clinic (BPDC).
3. Your GP may be able to follow up your hand injury.
4. You may not need to be seen by a healthcare practitioner again.

## Section 1 – Your hand injury needs an operation

### When will the operation happen?

Ideally within 2 weeks. **Please be available to answer your phone. We normally call at the beginning of the week. Please note it will be an ‘unknown number/number withheld/private number’.** When they call, the medical secretary will give you a date for your operation. **If you do not hear from us by the end of the week please call 0300 303 1573** and ask for the Plastic Surgery Secretaries.

### What do I need to do before the operation?

- You will be asked to be ‘nil by mouth’ before surgery.
- If you are having your operation in the morning, this means nothing to eat from midnight the night before.
- If your operation is in the afternoon, you may have a light breakfast before 6am on the day of your operation.
- You may drink clear fluids, i.e. water or black coffee/tea until 2 hours before your operation.
- You will be contacted by telephone before your operation, and this will be clarified. During this telephone call, we will also confirm the time and date of your procedure, as well as any other requirements.
- If you need any medications, such as antibiotics, these will be prescribed for you.

## What happens on the day?

You will need to arrive at the Leicester Royal Infirmary, Balmoral Building, Level 2, Theatre Arrivals Area (TAA) at 7.30am, unless you have been told of a different time. You will be met by a receptionist and then a nurse will do your admission paperwork and do basic tests such as blood pressure and pulse.

You will see the anaesthetist to talk about the anaesthetic you will be having, and to check if you have had any previous health problems. You will also see the surgeon before the operation to talk about the procedure and answer any questions you may have. At this stage, the surgeon will ask you to sign a consent form (if you have not done so already when you attended the Emergency Department).

## What happens during the operation?

You will be given either:

- a local anaesthetic,
- general anaesthetic (put to sleep), or
- regional anaesthetic (where your arm is put to sleep, but you stay awake).

The surgeon will do the procedure. After the surgery is over the anaesthetist will wake you up if you have had a general anaesthetic. You may need stitches (sutures) and/or a plaster cast or splint. The details of these will be explained to you after the operation.

## What happens after the operation?

If you stayed awake during the operation, you will go to a ward. If you have had a general anaesthetic, you will be taken to a recovery area to be monitored closely while you wake up completely. Sometimes you may feel a bit sick (nauseous) after the general anaesthetic, this is normal and will wear off. Once you have recovered fully from the anaesthetic you will be able to go home, this is usually the same day. It is advisable that you have someone to pick you up from the hospital and to stay the night at your house with you if you live alone. This is recommended after any type of anaesthetic, as sometimes people can feel faint or unwell a few hours after surgery, and you may need some help at home.

If you have a splint or dressing, please do not take this off this unless a member of the Plastic Surgery team has told you to do so. This may also mean you are unable to drive or work whilst the splint or dressings are on. How long you may need to stay off work or not drive, will be explained to you by the surgeon.

## Will my hand be painful after the operation and will it scar?

No surgery is pain free and pain relief is advised to control discomfort. Unfortunately, it is not possible to carry out surgery without leaving a scar. Your scar will be dependent on many factors including the wound size, location, and original injury.

## **What happens to the stitches in my hand after the operation?**

Sometimes, dissolvable stitches are used which generally remain for 1 to 2 weeks. If non-dissolvable stitches are used, this will be explained to you after the procedure as to who will remove them and when.

Most likely you will be seen in our Dressing Clinic for a wound check but sometimes you can see your GP. This will be explained to you after the procedure, before you go home.

## **What happens if I have a splint?**

If you have a splint on, the details will be explained to you after the operation. You may come back to our Dressing Clinic around 1 week after the operation to see nurses and Occupational Therapists to review the splint and change it as necessary. In some cases, splints are needed for up to 8 weeks, so please do not remove these until you have been seen by a member of the Plastic Surgery team. This may also mean you are unable to drive or work whilst the splint or dressings are on. How long you may need to stay off work or not drive, will be explained to you by the surgeon.

## **Will I see the surgeon for follow-up and will I be given any exercises for my hand?**

If a structure (such as a tendon or nerve) is damaged in your hand, then the surgeon will see you in 6 to 8 weeks to see how you are getting on and how the use of your hand is. You will get a letter in the post giving you a date and time for your clinic appointment.

You will either be given a leaflet explaining the exercises or you will be shown what exercises to do by the physiotherapists. These exercises or instructions will be different for different types of injuries. While the exercises can seem a bit boring at times, it is important that you do them to get the best recovery. Your muscles will not have been in use while you were injured, so it will take time and patience for them to heal. You may also see an occupational therapist who will provide splints that are appropriate for your recovery.

You may need to be off work for a number of weeks after the operation. This will be explained to you before you go home and you will be updated how long to be off work for when you come to the clinics.

## **Section 2 – Follow-up with a plastic surgeon in outpatients clinic/ nurses in BPDC**

You may have been told you have a follow-up appointment with the plastic surgeon at the outpatients clinic at LRI. This may be after an operation on your hand injury, or it may be after a plaster cast or stitches.

## When will I receive my appointment and what happens during and after my appointment?

Depending on the type of injury, you will be contacted with the details, most likely by telephone. At your appointment, the clinician will check how you have been getting on. They will look at how well your hand is healing and how good the movements and strength of the hand is. At the end of your appointment, the surgeon/ nurse will decide if they need to see you again or if you can be safely discharged.

### Section 3 – The GP practice will provide follow-up

If you do not need to be seen by a specialist healthcare practitioner, then your GP or practice nurse can follow you up. You will need to make an appointment with your GP practice to have the stitches removed in the next 7 to 10 days as per the directions from the hospital doctor.

### Section 4 – You do not need follow-up

The original healthcare practitioner has said you do not need to see a healthcare professional again for your hand injury unless you develop any of the symptoms listed on p1. If you have been prescribed antibiotics or given any hand exercises to do then please ensure that you complete the course of antibiotics and do the hand exercises as instructed.

### Contact details

0300 303 1573 and ask for the Plastic Surgery Secretaries.

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

જો તમને અન્ય ભાષામાં આ માહિતી જોઈતી હોય, તો નીચે આપેલ નંબર પર કૃપા કરી ટેલિફોન કરો

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

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)