

How will my hand injury be treated?

Burns and Plastics Treatment Centre

Last reviewed: December 2025

Next review: December 2028

Information for Patients

Leaflet number: 1296 Version: 2

Why have I been given this leaflet?

This leaflet is for you because you have damaged your hand. The Emergency may have given you a dressing, splint or stitches when you first came to them. This leaflet will give you information about what will happen next with your hand injury.

How should I care for my hand?

- Keep the dressing clean and dry. This reduce the risk getting infected.
- Put a plastic bag your hand in the shower.
- **If you have been given antibiotic tablets, you must take the whole course as instructed. This is even if you think the wound is healing well.**

What should I be aware of with my hand?

Get medical advice right away by calling 111, or go to the Emergency Department if you have these symptoms:

- Swelling
- Redness
- 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
or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice**

Visit www.uhleicester.nhs.uk for maps and information about visiting Leicester's Hospitals
To give feedback about this information sheet, contact uhl-tr.informationforpatientsmailbox@nhs.net

How is my hand injury going to be managed?

How you treat a hand injury depends on what kind of injury it is and how bad it is. There are different ways to help it get better. The doctors or nurses who first looked at your injury should have explained the choices and plan for your care. This leaflet gives a quick overview of the different ways to treat hand injuries, so make sure to read the part that applies to you.

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

- **Option 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.
- **Option 2:** You may need an outpatient hospital appointment with a plastic surgeon or with a nurse in Burns and Plastics Treatment Centre (BPTC). This is to check how your hand is healing.
- **Option 3:** Your GP may be able to follow up your hand injury.
- **Option 4:** You might not need to see a doctor or nurse again.

More details about each option is explained in the leaflet below.

Option 1: Your hand injury needs an operation

When will the operation happen?

It should happen within 2 weeks.

Please be available to answer your phone. We normally call at the beginning of the week. We will call from an 'unknown number/number withheld/private number'.

During the 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 must fast before surgery. This means you cannot eat or drink. When you start fasting depends on the time of your operation:
 - Morning operation: You must not eat from midnight (12am) the night before.
 - Afternoon operation: You can have a light breakfast before 6am on the day of your operation.
- You may drink clear fluids like water or black coffee/tea until 2 hours before your operation.
- We will call you before your operation. During this call, we will also confirm the time and date of your procedure, as well as any other requirements.
- We will prescribe you any medications, such as antibiotics, that you may need.

What happens on the day?

You must come to 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 must go to the reception. They will ask for your details. Then a nurse will do your admission paperwork. They will then do basic tests such as blood pressure and pulse.

The anaesthetist will talk to you about the anaesthetic you will be having. They will check if you have had any health problems. The surgeon will also see you before the operation to talk about the procedure. They will answer any questions you may have. The surgeon will ask you to sign a consent form. This is if you have not done so already when you attended the Emergency Department.

What happens during the operation?

We will give you 1 of the below:

- a local anaesthetic. This is a medicine given by an injection that numbs a small area so you do not feel pain during the procedure.
- general anaesthetic. This is where we will put you to sleep.
- regional anaesthetic. This is where we put your arm to sleep, but you stay awake.

The surgeon will do the operation. 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, we will take you to a ward. If you have had a general anaesthetic, we will take you to a recovery area. This is so we can monitor you 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. When you have recovered fully from the anaesthetic you will be able to go home. This is often the same day. We advise 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. We recommend this after any type of anaesthetic. This is because 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 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. The surgeon will explain how long you may need to stay off work or not drive for.

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

Surgery can be painful, so you must use pain relief to help manage the discomfort. Sadly, surgery always leaves a scar. The size and look of the scar will depend on things like how big the wound is, where it is, and the type of injury you had.

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

Dissolvable stitches stay on for 1 to 2 weeks. If non-dissolvable stitches are used, we will explain to you who will remove them and when.

We will most likely see you at our Dressing Clinic for a wound check. But sometimes you can see your GP. We will let you know of this before you go home.

What happens if I have a splint?

If you have a splint, we will explain how it works after your operation. You might need to come back to the Dressing Clinic about 1 week later to have nurses and Occupational Therapists check and adjust it. Sometimes, you need to wear a splint for up to 8 weeks. Do not take it off until a Plastic Surgery team member says it's okay.

While you have the splint or dressings on, you might not be able to drive or work. The surgeon will tell you how long you need to stay off work or avoid driving.

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

If a part of your hand, like a tendon or nerve, is damaged, the surgeon will check on you in 6 to 8 weeks. This is to see how you are doing and how well you can use your hand. We will send you a letter in the mail with the date and time for your appointment.

We will either give you a leaflet explaining the exercises or the physiotherapists will show you what exercises. 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 give you splints that are best for your recovery.

You may need to be off work for a number of weeks after the operation. We will explain this to you before you go home. We will update you on how long to be off work for when you come to the clinics.



Option 2: Follow-up with a plastic surgeon in outpatients clinic/ nurses in BPTC

You might have a follow-up appointment with the plastic surgeon at the outpatients clinic at Leicester Royal Infirmary. This may be after an operation on your hand injury, or it may be after a plaster cast or stitches.

When will I get my appointment and what happens during and after my appointment?

We will most likely call you. 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.

Option 3: Follow-up with your GP

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.

Option 4: You do not need follow-up

The original doctor or nurse has said you do not need to see a healthcare professional again for your hand injury. This is unless you develop any of the symptoms listed on page 1. 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

Call **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

ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ, ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਹੇਠਾਂ ਦਿੱਤੇ ਗਏ ਨੰਬਰ 'ਤੇ ਟੈਲੀਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ।

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 uhl-tr.equalitymailbox@nhs.net