

Care after your hand or wrist surgery

Musculoskeletal and Specialist Surgery

Produced: February 2026

Review: February 2029

Information for Patients

Leaflet number: 1708 Version: 1

Introduction

There are many different types of hand and wrist surgery. The basic care for each is the same. The following information will help you to look after your hand after surgery. Numbness in your hand because of the local anaesthetic should get better within 24 hours (1 day). However, any numbness you had before surgery may stay the same.

Managing pain

You may take prescribed painkillers if needed. If the pain lasts for more than 2 to 3 days, or it suddenly gets worse after this time, you must call for advice from your local GP or the contact phone numbers given to you by your hospital.

Reducing swelling

We will give you a sling to keep your hand up. This helps to reduce swelling. Use this if you go out. At home when you are resting or in bed at night, keep your hand higher than your elbow by placing it on pillows/cushions. When moving around, place your hand onto your other shoulder.

Do not let your hand dangle down for long periods as your fingers may swell more.

If your fingers become more numb or change colour, lie down and put your hand on pillows higher than your shoulder. If these changes continue, you must call for advice from your local GP or the contact phone numbers given to you by the hospital.

**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

Looking after your dressing

Keep your wound covered. Make sure your dressing is clean and dry. Do not get your wound wet until we have checked it and the stitches are taken out. This is often at 10 to 14 days after surgery. You may take a bath or shower if your dressing has a waterproof covering. This can be a waterproof glove or a sealed plastic bag.

Avoiding stiffness

Start the exercises in this leaflet on the day of your surgery. Do as much as your bandage or splint allows you to. **Try to do 10 of each exercise, 4 times a day.** If you have seen a physiotherapist during your hospital stay it is important that you continue the exercises they have shown you when you return home. If you need outpatient physiotherapy, we will arrange this for you.

Other information

- At some time during your recovery you may need to wear a splint. We will give this to you in the outpatient clinic or have it made for you in the occupational therapy department.
- When we have removed your stitches you may wash or shower normally. Try not to soak your hand. Pat the wound dry rather than rubbing it. Massaging your scar with E45 cream will make it less sensitive. If your wound becomes hypersensitive please speak to your specialist nurse.
- It is a good idea to eat a healthy and varied diet. Try not to smoke as often or stop smoking completely. This will help your wound to heal and your hand to recover.
- You are advised not to drive for around 2 weeks until your wound heals. If you have a bulky bandage or plaster cast, you may not be insured or have safe control of the car.
- You can talk about going back to work with your Doctor or specialist nurse.

Looking out for signs of infection

If you develop any of the following please call for advice from your local GP or any of the contact phone numbers given to you by the hospital:

- Your wound becomes red, hot, swollen, or starts to leak a lot of fluid.
- Your pain increases.
- Your wound opens up.

If after reading this leaflet you have any more questions or concerns please speak to a member of staff.

Hand exercises



Exercise 1

1. Duck or knuckle bend.
2. Keeping the fingers straight, bend at just the knuckles.
3. Repeat up to 10 times.



Exercise 2

1. Finger hook.
2. Keeping the first knuckles straight, bend the top 2 finger joints to make a hook shape.
3. Hold for 5 seconds. Repeat up to 10 times.



Exercise 3

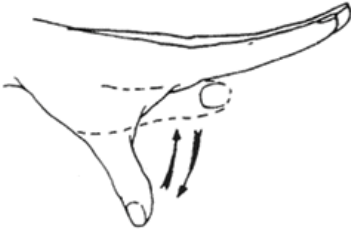
1. Make a fist.
2. Keep the wrist and fingers straight. Make a fist, then straighten the fingers.
3. Repeat up to 10 times.



Exercise 4

1. Finger spanning.
2. Spread fingers and bring them together.
3. Repeat up to 10 times.

Thumb exercises



Exercise 1

1. Lifting thumb up from palm (palmer abduction)
2. With your hand on its side, take your thumb out away from your palm, to make an 'L' shape.
3. Repeat up to 10 times.



Exercise 2

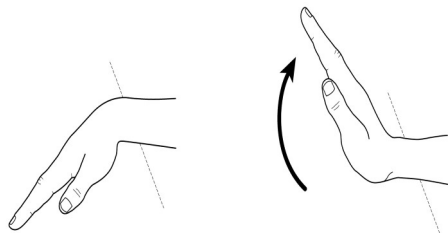
1. Moving you thumb away from your index finger (radial abduction)
2. With your palm flat on a table, take your thumb out and away to the side.
3. Repeat up to 10 times.



Exercise 3

1. Finger to thumb
2. With your thumb, touch each finger tip.
3. Repeat up to 10 times.

Wrist exercises



1. Wrist flex and extend
2. Rest your forearm on a table with the hand relaxed over the edge.
3. Drop the hand down, then lift the hand up.
4. Repeat up to 10 times.

Carpal tunnel surgery

The aim of the surgery is to reduce the pressure on the nerve in your palm that may be causing pins and needles or numbness to the thumb, index and middle fingers.

- Pins and needles often resolve quite quickly but numbness may take longer to recover. Some symptoms may stay if damage to the nerve is severe.
- After your surgery use your hand for light tasks as much as you are able to. The hand may swell, ache, be numb, tingle or have electric type shocks sometimes. This is quite normal.
- Please remove both bandages after 2 days. Make sure to keep a dressing over the wound until your stitches are removed. This will be 10 to 14 days after surgery either in Glenfield hospital clinic or at your GP surgery.
- Do not restrict movement by re-bandaging as this could cause stiffness and worse pain.
- Take pain killers as needed.
- At first the hand will be quite weak. Your strength should slowly return by using your hand.
- Normal use to your hand should return within 1 to 2 weeks but full recovery may take 6 to 9 months. Pain around the scar and in the wrist may continue for this time.

Trigger finger / thumb surgery

Trigger finger or thumb happens when the tendon becomes caught so it can no longer glide properly. Surgery aims to relieve pain, improve movement and stop your finger from getting stuck in a bent position.

- You will have a small cut in the palm of your hand below the affected finger or thumb.
- You may have a bulky bandage on your hand but it is important to move your fingers/ thumb right away after the surgery. You may use your hand for light tasks from the day of the surgery.
- Remove your bandages after 2 days but keep a dressing over your stitches. Keep this clean and dry until you have your stitches removed/ wound checked.
- You will need to have your stitches out 10 to 14 days after surgery. This may be with the specialist nurse in Glenfield hospital clinic E or at your GP surgery.

DeQuervain's tenosynovitis

This is a painful condition caused by rubbing on the tendons on the thumb side of the wrist. Surgery can release the tight tendon sheath, reducing friction.

You will have a wound to the wrist at the base of the thumb. You may have dissolvable or removable stitches.

Follow advice same advice given for trigger finger.



Ganglion or lump removal surgery

Lumps on the hand can be caused by overgrowth of different tissue types (like cartilage, veins, ligaments, fatty tissue). They may need removing if they cause pain or restrict movement in your wrist and fingers.

A ganglion is the most common. It tends to be smooth and round, containing thick fluid. You may have had a scan before your surgery to help the surgeon diagnose the cause of the lump. Often lumps are sent to the laboratory to be tested and this report will be explained to you at a follow up appointment with the surgeon a few weeks after surgery.

Aftercare from surgery:

- Elevate your hand to reduce bleeding and swelling.
- Remove your bandages after 2 days, unless you are told otherwise by your surgeon or nurse. Keep your wound covered, clean and dry until you have your stitches removed.
- The ward will give you spare dressings. Only change the dressing if needed.
- It is important to regain movement as soon as possible. Follow the exercises given in this leaflet. You may use your hand for light tasks from the day after the surgery. It is advisable not to drive until your stitches have been removed.
- You will need to have your stitches out 10 to 14 days after surgery. This may be with the specialist nurse at Glenfield hospital clinic E or at your GP surgery.
- If you have a finger dressing on or are not sure about removing dressings yourself please contact the specialist nurse for advice.

Contact details

Department of: _____

Contact details: _____

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 અસ્ય 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

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 uhl-tr.equalitymailbox@nhs.net