

# Care after thumb joint replacement surgery

Musculoskeletal and Specialist Surgery

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Information for Patients

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## Introduction

The carpometacarpal joint is at the base of your thumb. We can replace the old arthritic joint with a new artificial implant. This implant is designed to improve function and reduce pain. The following advice is to help you reduce the risk of complications after surgery and get the best result.

## Managing pain

If you had a nerve block, your arm may stay numb for a few hours. You will slowly begin to feel and have control on your arm. You may then need to take pain killing tablets. Follow the prescription instructions on the packet. If your pain last more than 2 to 3 days or it suddenly gets worse, get advice from your GP or call the contact numbers given to you by the 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 resting, keep your hand higher than your elbow by placing it on pillows/cushions.

Do not let your hand dangle down for long periods as your fingers may swell. 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 then get medical advice.

## Avoiding stiffness

Exercise your fingers, wrist, elbow and shoulder regularly. Your thumb movement will be restricted at first by the theatre bandages.

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

Visit [www.uhleicester.nhs.uk](http://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](mailto:uhl-tr.informationforpatientsmailbox@nhs.net)

## 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

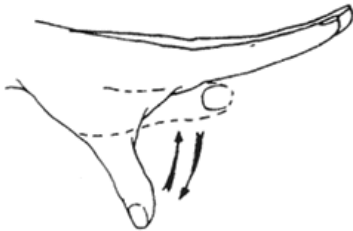
1. Make a fist.
2. Keep the wrist and fingers straight. Make a fist, then straighten the fingers.
3. Repeat up to 10 times.



### Exercise 4

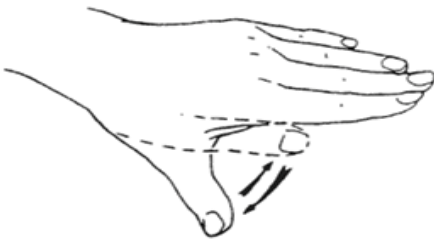
1. Finger spanning.
2. Spread fingers and bring them together.
3. Repeat up to 10 times.

## 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

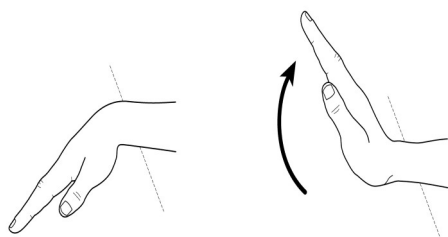
1. Moving you thumb away from your index finger (radial abduction).
2. With your palm flat on a table, take your thumb out and away to the side.
3. Repeat up to 10 times.



### 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.



## Looking after your dressing

Keep your dressings clean and dry. You may have a bath or shower as long as you wear a waterproof cover over your bandages. These will stay on for 2 weeks until you see the specialist nurse in clinic. We will make an appointment for you on the day of surgery.

## Other information

At your 2 week wound check the nurse will fit a removable splint and tell you how often to wear it. You may then start the exercises shown in this leaflet . **Be careful not to pull the splint off your thumb too roughly as there is a slight risk of dislocation if you apply force.**

Once your stitches have been removed you may wash or shower normally. Try not to soak your hand. Pat the wound dry rather than rubbing it. Massaging the wound with a non-perfumed cream, such as E45 will help your recovery and make the scar less sensitive.

If your wound does becomes hypersensitive to touch please ask your specialist nurse for advice.

It is a good idea to eat a healthy, varied diet and to decrease or stop smoking. This will help your wound to heal and your hand to recover.

You are advised not to drive or lift anything heavy for around 6 weeks until you see the consultant and have an X-ray. You can talk about your return to work with you consultant or nurse.

## Looking out for signs of an infection

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

- Your wound remains red, hot, swollen, starts to leak any fluid or opens up.
- Your pain increases.
- You feel feverish or unwell.

If after reading this leaflet you have any more questions or concerns please do not hesitate to ask a member of staff or the specialist nurses.

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](mailto:uhl-tr.equalitymailbox@nhs.net)