



PHYSIOTHERAPY DEPARTMENT

LOOKING AFTER YOUR HAND FOLLOWING SURGERY

At the end of your operation your hand/arm will be wrapped in a bulky bandage to reduce bleeding and swelling, and support the hand/wrist. Unless they have been wrapped up, you will be able to move your fingers and thumb with the bandage on and use your hand for light, clean, dry activities. If the thumb or any of the fingers are in bandages, you will need to keep them still until you are advised otherwise in your initial appointment in physiotherapy or your appointment with your Mr Elvey.

You should keep your hand elevated for the first week or so, to allow the normal post-operative swelling to subside.

What is hand therapy?

Mr Elvey will advise you whether you will require hand therapy following your surgery. Hand therapy is the treatment of hand and wrist conditions and injuries using methods such as exercise, splinting and wound care. Hand therapists combine a number of therapeutic interventions and skills. Hand Therapy has a crucial role in the recovery from injury of the hand or wrist, and in the recovery from hand surgical operations.

We provide:

- Specialist advice and education to enable self-management at home.
- Advice on improving movement, build strength and regain function of the hand
- Joint mobilisations
- Stretches
- Active and resisted exercise
- Ultrasound
- Scar management
- Retraining and restoration of hand function
- Pain Management techniques
- Splinting.



Managing your swelling:

Swelling is normal part of your bodies healing response, it is extremely important to manage your swelling as it contributes to joint stiffness

Before discharge you will be given a sling, keep your arm/ hand elevated above your heart for at least the first 10 days (see photographs below for most optimum position), elevation is most effective during this period. You are not required to wear a sling continuously, as this can cause shoulder and neck stiffness, other options are to rest on a high pillow for periods.



Recommended position:
Elevated with hand above
heart

After about 10-14 days you can start to have your arm by your side.

You may use ice wrapped in a pillow case over the affected area for short periods up to 10 minutes, it may also be soothing for the pain.

Normal Movement:

It is important to move all joints that have not been operated on and that are free from a cast to move.

If the fingers and thumb are free to move, gently move them through their full range of motion. This may be a little sore at first, but it is perfectly safe.

Keep your elbow and shoulder moving. Stretch your arm out to your side and lift your arm above your head, put your hand behind your back and shrug your shoulders.

If the fingers and thumb are free to move, use your hand for light, clean, dry activities. Do not carry anything heavy or do any heavy gripping.

Do not drive whilst you are wearing the bulky bandage.

Hygiene:

Do not get your hand wet. You can carefully clean your fingers and thumb with “Wet Wipes” or cotton wool pads wetted with water. Put a plastic bag over your bandages when you have a shower or purchase a waterproof cover. These are available online or at your chemist.

What can I do to get the best outcome?

Have realistic expectations: Your hand will feel stiff and tender to start with, this will improve with time.

Bones and soft tissue can take up to 3 months to fully recover and regain enough strength for heavy lifting, weight bearing and contact sports.

You should avoid general exercise until you have been reviewed by your consultant or physiotherapist; they will be able to advise you on appropriate return to exercising.

You may need to discuss and negotiate modified work duties with your employer.

Please feel free to email our hand therapist Rachel Maccabee at Rachel.Maccabee@spirehealthcare.com or call the department on 020 8950 9090, extension 2496



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Notes

