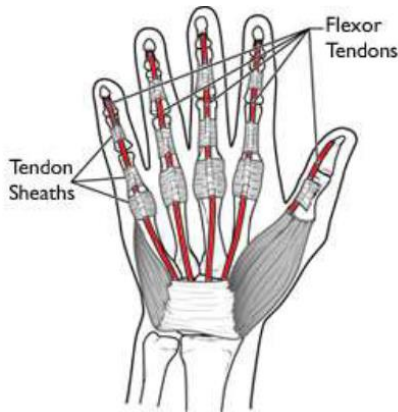




Flexor Tendon Repair

Anatomy and Function of a flexor tendon



Your flexor tendons enable your fingers and thumb to bend into your palm. The tendon attaches the muscle to the bone. The muscles start in your forearm and change into tendons as they reach your wrist. You have two tendons that go to each finger and one tendon to your thumb. When the muscle works; the tendons pull on the bones and make your finger(s) or thumb move.

Your Injury and operation

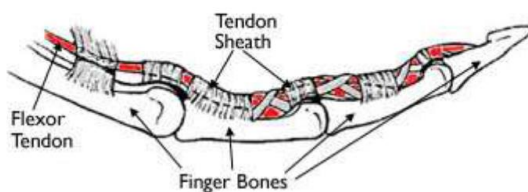
The injury that you have had has resulted in damage to one or more of the flexor tendons to your finger(s)/thumb.

There are also nerves, blood vessels, ligaments and bones that may have been damaged in the same injury. Your therapist will talk through your operation with you as every injury is individual. The hand surgery team have repaired the damaged tendons. In the operation the surgeon brings the two cut ends of the tendon together and puts some stitches inside and around the tendon. After the operation they will have put a plaster of paris backslab onto your arm to protect the tendons.

Why do I need to come for hand therapy?

Now that the surgeons have repaired your tendon(s), it is important to protect it whilst it is healing. Your hand therapist will replace the plaster of paris backslab with a custom made plastic splint that you will wear for up to 6 weeks after your surgery. It is important to start exercises within your splint soon after the operation. This helps to avoid joint stiffness, promote healing and improve active movement in your finger/thumb. Normally your flexor tendons glide within a sheath up your fingers or thumb and the injury and surgery can cause scar tissue that restricts the glide. You can improve this glide by doing exercises. If you were only given a splint and did not exercise you would end up with a stiff finger that did not work well in function.

Diagram of the Tendon Sheath



Your hand therapist will guide you through the stages of tendon healing and progress your exercises as the weeks move on to help you maximise the recovery of your hand. It will be important for you to exercise very regularly at home as well. They will also give


you advice on how to manage any scarring or swelling in your finger or hand. You will need to attend hand therapy




appointments every week for the first 5 weeks after your operation for the therapist to progress your exercises. After this your therapist will assess how often you need to attend, depending on your individual needs. You will be followed up in a specialist therapy clinic 6 weeks after your operation so that your progress can be assessed. It is not normally necessary to see a hand surgeon again after your operation.

Important Information

You will be wearing your splint all of the time for the first 5 weeks after your operation and then for one week further at night. **You will not be able to use your hand for any activity for the first 5 weeks** as the tendon repair is not strong enough. If you do use your hand you are at risk of rupturing the repairs and would then need more surgery. It takes 12 weeks for the tendon to return to full strength.

	<p>Approximate Timescales for Returning to Activity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">☒ Typing – 6 weeks☒ Writing – 8 weeks☒ Driving – 8-10 weeks☒ Cycling – 8-10 weeks☒ Contact sports – 12 weeks <p>Please discuss specific activities with your therapist as every injury and person is individual.</p>
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	<p><u>Potential Complications</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">☒ Rupture of the tendon repairs☒ Infection/delayed wound healing☒ Hypertrophic/keloid/hypersensitive scarring☒ Prolonged swelling/thickening of the finger☒ Stiffness in the finger☒ Inability to fully straighten the finger☒ Cold intolerance☒ Complex Regional Pain Syndrome (CRPS)
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