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Surgery for Cut Flexor Tendons

Information For Patients

Fracture & Orthopaedic Clinic Arrowe Park Hospital

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There are two flexor tendons in each of your fingers and one in the thumb. When the muscle tightens in your forearm it pulls through these tendons to close your fingers into a fist or to pick up an object. Cut tendons do not heal without surgery. It is important that cut tendons are repaired in order to regain good use of your hand.

The Operation:

- The operation is performed under general anaesthesia; in other words you are asleep.
- When a tendon is cut the ends pull apart. To find the ends we usually have to enlarge the skin wound.
- Your injured tendon(s) will be repaired with small strong stitches.
- At the end of the operation a splint will be put on your hand and forearm to protect your tendon while it heals. It is very important that you wear this.
- It is likely that you will be able to go home a few hours after surgery.

After your operation:

Pain: is usually relieved by simple painkillers, which will be provided for you. It settles in the first week, but mild tenderness may persist for several weeks.

Stitches: will be removed in clinic about 10 days after surgery. It is important that you keep your dressing clean & dry until then to minimize the risk of infection.

Physiotherapy: surgery is only the first step. A good result also depends on correct use of your splint and how well you do your exercises. The Physiotherapist will see you after your operation to show you the correct way to exercise your fingers. This is important to prevent your fingers becoming stiff and to encourage good healing of the tendon without straining it.

Recovery: your tendon(s) will not be strong enough for light every day activities until 6 weeks after surgery. **Please wear your splint at all times for 6 weeks.** It takes a further 6 weeks for the tendon to fully heal and be able to withstand strenuous activity e.g.: manual work, contact sport.

How much improvement will I get?

Our aim is to help you recover sufficient movement to perform normal daily activities well, but you will probably not be able to bend the finger as tightly into the palm as you did before the accident. Sometimes movement of the finger is disappointing. This is most likely to happen if your injury was particularly severe or if you do not exercise correctly.

What went wrong?

Tendon rupture: occasionally, the stitches fail before the tendon has fully healed. The tendon comes apart & must be repaired again. The risk of rupture is much greater if you remove the splint too early. There is usually a feeling of something snapping or giving way. It is not an emergency, but if

you think this may have happened please contact your physiotherapist as soon as possible during normal working hours on **0151 604 7045**. The physiotherapist will then examine your hand & if the tendon has failed we will offer surgery within a week.

Stuck tendon: as the tendon heals, the cut ends may stick to each other or to other parts of your finger. It is to prevent this that we ask you to exercise from the beginning. Sometimes this fails and further surgery will be required to release the fingers.

Infection: occurs after 1-2% of operations. It should be suspected if pain & swelling increase a few days after surgery.

In this case please contact the
Fracture Clinic

at
Arrowe Park Hospital
on

0151 604 7069

between 9 & 11am Mon – Fri
or by
contacting your GP.