

# TRIGGER FINGER OR THUMB REHABILITATION

Patient Information



## Recovery and rehabilitation after surgery

### Structured Rehab Program: TRIGGER FINGER OR TRIGGER THUMB

#### Structured Rehab Program: Post-Trigger Finger Surgery

##### Overview:

This program is designed for patients recovering from trigger finger or trigger thumb release surgery. It emphasises self-directed exercises, scar management, awareness of potential complications, and expected timescales for recovery.

See also patient info for Exercises and scar management techniques.

#### Phase 1: Immediate Post-Op (Days 0-7) You will have a bulky bandage which you can take off after 48 hrs

- **Goals:**
  - Control swelling
  - Maintain finger mobility
  - Protect incision - keep the wound covered
- **Self-Directed Exercises:**
  - **Gentle finger movement:**
    - Begin moving the affected finger as soon as possible (unless otherwise instructed)
    - Make a gentle fist, then fully straighten fingers
    - Repeat 10 times, every hour while awake
  - **Swelling control:**
    - Elevate hand above heart
    - Apply cold packs (wrapped in cloth) for 10-15 minutes, 2-3 times daily
- **Scar Management:**
  - Keep incision clean and dry - after day 5 if the incision is dry you can leave it uncovered and wash and dry your hand normally although avoid rubbing the healing wound area - pat it dry.
  - No direct scar massage until wound is fully healed (usually after stitches are removed, around day 7-10)
- **Potential Complications:**
  - Infection (redness, swelling, leaky wound, warmth, pus, fever) - contact the hospital helpline if you are concerned.
  - Excessive swelling or pain
  - Stiffness
- **Timescale:**
  - Stitches usually removed at 7-10 days
  - Most patients can use their hand for light activities within a few days

#### Phase 2: Early Recovery (Weeks 2-4)

- **Goals:**
  - Restore full range of motion
  - Prevent scar adhesions

- **Self-Directed Exercises:**

- **Active range of motion:**

- Make hook fist
    - Make a full fist, then fully straighten fingers
    - Touch each fingertip to the thumb
    - Spread fingers wide, then bring them together
    - Repeat each exercise 10 times, 3-5 times daily

- **Functional use:**

- Increase hand for daily activities as tolerated
    - Return to light or office based work

- **Scar Management: see scar management information sheet as well**

- Once incision is healed, begin gentle scar massage (circular motions with lotion or vitamin E oil, or silicone scar gel 2-3 times daily)
  - Consider silicone gel sheets if recommended

- **Potential Complications:**

- Scar sensitivity or thickening
  - Persistent stiffness
  - Nerve irritation (numbness, tingling)

- **Timescale:**

- Most patients regain good motion by 2-4 weeks
  - Scar aremay remain sensitive for several weeks

### Phase 3: Strengthening & Full Function (Weeks 4-8)

- **Goals:**

- Restore strength and dexterity
  - Minimise scar tightness

- **Self-Directed Exercises:**

- **Strengthening:**

- Squeeze a soft ball or therapy putty
    - Pinch exercises (pinch putty or clothes pegs)
    - Continue range of motion and functional tasks
    - 10 reps, 2-3 times daily

- **Scar Management:**

- Continue scar massage and silicone gel as needed
  - Protect scar from sun exposure

- **Potential Complications:**

- Rarely, recurrence of triggering
  - Persistent pain or swelling
  - Scar contracture

- **Timescale:**

- Most patients return to full normal activities by 4-6 weeks
  - Full recovery, including scar maturation, may take up to 3 months especially where the skin is hypersensitive or tender.

### General Tips:

- Perform exercises regularly, and do them slowly holding each position for a few seconds but stop if you experience sharp pain or increased swelling
- Monitor for signs of infection or complications
- Contact the helpline if you notice persistent stiffness, pain, or abnormal symptoms or if you do not think you are recovering at the expected pace. We can arrange for you to see the hand therapist or consultant very quickly

### Note:

This program is a general guideline. Always follow your surgeon or therapist's specific instructions and adapt exercises based on your comfort and progress.