

Stitches

An appointment may be made for you to attend the Orthopaedic Clinic to have your stitches removed. If not, you will be asked to either make an appointment to see your GP 10-14 days after the operation for this to be done, or they will be removed in the Physiotherapy Department.

Follow-Up Care

An outpatient physiotherapy appointment will be arranged for you before you are discharged from hospital. Please ensure you have this. This first appointment will take approximately 1 hour.

Usually the dressings will be reduced at this first appointment. Once your dressings have been reduced, a night splint will be made for you. You should wear this at night for 6 months to prevent subsequent contractures.

If for some reason you do not have an appointment, please contact the physiotherapy department the day after your operation.

Any other follow-up appointments will be given to you before you leave or sent to you by post.

If you have any questions or require further information or advice, please contact one of the following:

DAY SURGERY UNIT Mon - Fri
(between 8 am and 7 pm) 01935 384339

PHYSIOTHERAPY DEPARTMENT Mon - Fri
(between 8:30 am and 5 pm) 01935 384358

ORTHOPAEDIC CLINIC Mon - Fri
(between 9 am and 5 pm) 01935 384319

After 7 pm, the Senior Sister on Duty
(Clinical Site Manager) 01935 384525

If you require this leaflet in any other format, eg, large print, please telephone 01935 384590

Release of Dupuytren's Contracture

***Day Surgery Unit
and Physiotherapy
Department***

Please read this sheet carefully and if there is anything you do not understand or if you require further information, speak to your nurse or physiotherapist.

Dupuytren's Contracture is a thickening and tightening of a layer of tissue in the palm of the hand resulting in the affected finger(s) or thumb becoming fixed in a bent position. Surgery releases the tight tissue thereby allowing the finger(s) or thumb to straighten as much as possible again.

ON THE WARD

You will be visited by the doctor, who will discuss the operation and give you an opportunity to ask any questions.

The site of the operation will be marked and your written consent for the operation obtained.

All jewellery on the affected side should be removed.

AFTER THE OPERATION

Discomfort

You will be offered mild pain relief medication to take for the first 2 to 4 days to deal with any discomfort you may have.

Severe, continuous pain should be reported to your doctor.

Swelling

To aid the removal of swelling in your hand, it is essential that you follow the instructions below:

1. You will be supplied with a sling or collar and cuff to keep your hand above your heart when standing and walking.
2. Remove your sling hourly to stretch your arm above your head and to bend and straighten your elbow. Repeat each exercise 10 times and then replace your arm in the sling. This will stop your shoulder and elbow from becoming stiff.
3. When sitting or lying, support your arm and hand on pillows at heart height.
4. If you experience excessive swelling of the hand and fingers, it may indicate that the bandage is too tight particularly if, in addition, the fingers are very painful, numb, cold or blue. If these symptoms are not improved by exercising the fingers as described in the next section, contact the Casualty Department of your local hospital or your own doctor.

Infection

Immediately report any signs of infection to your GP, physiotherapist or consultant. These may be:

- increased pain not related to exercise
- increased redness
- pain in your arm
- flu type feelings combined with any of the above

Exercises

It is extremely important that you practice the following exercises for approximately 5 minutes every hour during the day in order for your hand to heal with maximum movement following the operation. Slow, controlled exercises are more effective and more comfortable than quick movements. The exercises should be started as soon after the operation as possible:

1. stretch your arm above your head
2. bend and straighten your elbow
3. bend your wrist backwards and forwards
4. gently stretch your fingers and thumb apart
5. bend your fingers to touch the palm of your hand as if to make a fist
6. try and touch the tip of each finger with your thumb

NB: DO NOT FORCE YOUR FINGERS STRAIGHT WITH YOUR OTHER HAND UNTIL TOLD OTHERWISE.

General Guidelines

- **do not** drive or return to work until you have discussed this with your consultant or physiotherapist
- do not use your hand except to do the exercises. You will be advised by your physiotherapist when you may return to daily activities.