



University Hospitals Birmingham
NHS Foundation Trust



Hand extensor tendon repair therapy advice

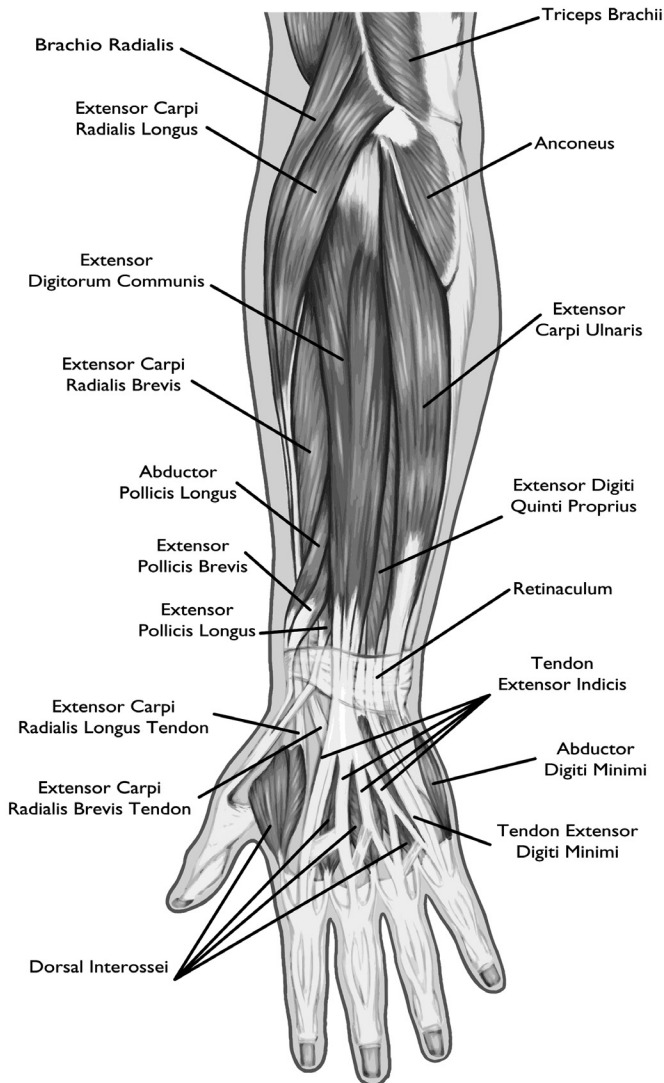
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Background

The extensor tendons run from the muscles in the back of your forearm, into the hand, where they attach to the bones in your fingers and the thumb (Fig 1). They enable you to straighten your fingers and thumb. A cut in these tendons, even if only part way through, is a serious injury and will require regular therapy. It is important that you follow the advice of your therapist in order to achieve the best possible outcome.

Figure 1



After surgery

Injuries are usually repaired with direct closure which means bringing the two ends of the tendon together. Repaired tendons require protection from breaking and you will therefore need to wear a splint for 4–6 weeks depending on your consultants preference (Fig 2).

Figure 2



Early exercises (up to 4 weeks after surgery)

A thermoplastic splint will be made for you in the first week after your surgery. You will need to wear this splint for 4–6 weeks from your surgery. Your therapist will advise you on the following exercises which are shown in figure 3. These exercises should be completed whilst wearing your splint, 10 times every hour.

3a. Lift your fingers off the splint from your knuckle joint.

Figure 3a



3b. Bend all of your fingers from your middle finger joints ensuring that your knuckle joints are kept straight.

Figure 3b



Later exercises (more than 4 weeks after surgery)

The following exercises can be completed more than 4 weeks after your surgery and not before. It is important that you only start doing these exercises when you are told to by your therapist. Complete these exercises 3–4 times per day for 5 minutes at a time (Fig 4).

Figure 4a



4a. Keeping your finger joints straight, bend your knuckle joints until you reach the position shown in the picture.

Figure 4b



4b. Keeping your knuckle joints straight, bend your fingers at the middle and end joint until your reach the position shown in the picture.

Figure 4c



4c. Keeping the end joint of your fingers straight, bend your fingers from your knuckle and your middle finger joints until your reach the position shown in the picture.

Figure 4d



4d. Make a fist

General advice

Do

- Wear your splint as advised by your therapist, your therapist will inform you when it is safe to remove your splint
- Elevate your hand to control the swelling, raise your hand on two pillows when sitting or sleeping and hold it at shoulder level when walking
- Exercise hourly when awake. Your therapist will advise you on how your exercises should be completed. It is essential that you do your exercises as they are shown

Do not

- Use your hand for any activities as this may result in failure of the repair
- Drive until advised that this is safe for you to do so, by either your therapist or your consultant
- Lift or carry heavy things for 8–10 weeks from your surgery to allow your tendon to recover full strength

Be alert to any problems

- **Wound care** – Your stitches will be removed 10–14 days after surgery
- **Infection** – If your hand becomes increasingly painful, hot or looks red and swollen you may have an infection. If this is the case it is important that you contact your GP
- **Tendon rupture** – Any sudden loss of movement with or without pain, may indicate that your repair has broken. If this is the case it is important that you seek advice immediately from your Therapist, Consultant or the Emergency Department
- **Pain** – This may be due to swelling or another complication, speak to your therapist or your GP if you have any concerns

Contacts

The following numbers are for the consultants’ secretaries:

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Hand Therapy **0121 371 3488**

If you require this information in another format, such as a different language, large print, braille or audio version please ask a member of staff or email **patientexperience@uhb.nhs.uk**.

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