

# Post-op Advice Following Joint Replacement

## Proximal Interphalangeal Joints

Arthritis can lead to painful and deformed joints. The proximal interphalangeal joints (PIPJ) are frequently affected and can lead to pain and stiffness in these fingers. Surgery for this condition is to replace the PIPJs with small artificial joints that act as flexible hinges, but are unfortunately not as effective as the original healthy joint. This surgery reduces pain and corrects the deformity of the fingers. In this document, you will find important information regarding your post-operative care.

### Dressing

After the surgery, a bulky dressing will be applied on your hand, sometimes including a plaster cast.

- Keep your hand dry.
- Notify us if the dressing feels too tight, or if there is blood or pus coming through the bandage.

### Swelling

Swelling is expected after a surgery. To minimise the swelling for the first two weeks after surgery, it is recommended to:

- Elevate your hand at night using a pillow and as much as you can during the day.
- Move your shoulder, elbow, wrist and any free fingers every hour.

### Wound/scar

You will have a wound on your finger at the middle joint. The wound will be inspected at your first follow up appointment after the surgery. The bulky dressing will be replaced by a lighter one at this time. You will be instructed on how to care for the wound from this point onwards and monitor for signs of infection.

The scar can be lumpy and tender to touch for 6 - 8 weeks. This can be helped by massaging the scar with white, unscented moisturising cream once the wound is fully healed. This should be done regularly, with the recommended amount being 5 minutes every 2 hours. The hand therapist will advise you further on scar massage.

### Hand therapy

A splint to keep the finger protected will be custom made in your first Hand Therapy session. This splint will be for full-time wear, 24 hours a day. You will also get one or two exercise splints to use alongside your full-time splint when performing your exercises. These exercise splints will get your finger bending a little more each week. The splints are usually worn for four to six weeks depending on the progress of your movement. Most people will require hand therapy for the first 3 - 6 months after surgery.










### Use of the hand in your daily activities

In the first four weeks following your surgery, it is recommended that you do not use your hand. After 4 weeks, you should be able to start using the hand for light activities, but this will be guided by your hand therapist. We usually recommend avoiding driving until 8 weeks or when you have regained sufficient mobility in your fingers to grasp the wheel/gear lever safely. It is also recommended that you contact your insurance company for clarification of insurance coverage while wearing splints. Recovery from this surgery can be slow and it can sometimes be 3-6 months before you resume heavier activities.

**Week 1 – 4: EXERCISES IN SPLINT** (10 repetitions, every 1 - 2 hours)

**Week 5-6 onwards: ACTIVE EXERCISES** (10 repetitions, every 1 - 2 hours)

		
<p><input type="checkbox"/> <b>ISOLATED BEND TOP JOINT</b></p> <p>Take the top strap off and bend only the top joint of the finger.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> <b>BEND TO SPLINT</b></p> <p>Take top two straps off. Bend the top two joints of the finger into the exercise splint.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> <b>STRAIGHTEN THE FINGER</b></p> <p>Straighten the finger fully, back into the protective splint.</p>

			
<p><input type="checkbox"/> <b>FULL EXTENSION</b></p> <p>Extend all the fingers fully. If they cannot straighten fully, use your other hand to push them fully straight.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> <b>INTRINSIC PLUS or SHELF POSITION</b></p> <p>Bend at the bottom joints/nkuckles while keeping the fingers straight like a shelf.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> <b>CLAW FIST</b></p> <p>Bend the tips of your fingers.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> <b>FULL FIST</b></p> <p>Bend your fingers into a full fist whilst keeping your thumb away from your hand.</p>

## Contacting us

If you have any or concerns, please contact Hand Therapy on **020 3299 8220** (Monday to Friday, 8am to 4.30pm) or on **kch-tr.therapyappts@nhs.net**.

## MyChart

Our MyChart app and website lets you securely access parts of your health record with us, giving you more control over your care. To sign up or for help, call us on **020 3299 4618** or email **kings.mychart@nhs.net**. Visit **www.kch.nhs.uk/mychart** to find out more.

## PALS

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) is a service that offers support, information and assistance to patients, relatives and visitors. They can also provide help and advice if you have a concern or complaint that staff have not been able to resolve for you. They can also pass on praise or thanks to our teams.

Tel: **020 3299 4618** Email: **kings.pals@nhs.net**

If you would like the information in this leaflet in a different language or format, please contact our Interpreting and Accessible Communication Support on **020 3299 4618** or email **kings.access@nhs.net**