

Thumb CMC joint replacement

Information for patients

Thumb carpometacarpal (CMC) joint arthroplasty replacement is an operation to replace the joint at the base of your thumb with an artificial joint. This is usually done to relieve pain in the arthritic joint.

What will happen after the operation?

You will be put in plaster for about two weeks. You will be seen by the hand therapy department to begin exercising the thumb and have a splint fitted, which you should wear for approximately 6-8 weeks after your operation.

Healing times

It takes approximately six weeks for the soft tissues around the joint to heal and another 6 weeks for the thumb to become strong enough for heavy activities.

Hand use

Recovery from this operation can be slow. It can often be three to six months before you can start normal heavy activities again.

When you can return to work depends on the job you do, but generally, it will be when your thumb feels comfortable and relatively pain-free

Guidance on timeline:

- Week 2 to 6 after surgery – once cast removed, light to medium activities, avoid pinching, tight gripping and heavy activities.
- Driving: from 6 weeks, however everyone is different, and it is worth double checking with your doctor.
- Week 10 to 12 after injury – medium to heavy activities.
- Week 12 to 14 after injury – no restrictions.

Common complications

- **Post operation discomfort type pain:** please don't push into sharp pain when doing your exercises and please alert the team if you are experiencing high levels of pain
- **Numbness and pins and needles in fingers:** temporary or intermittent symptoms are normal during casting and initially once the cast is removed. These symptoms should resolve within a few weeks after cast removal – the exercises below and general hand use should help with resolving symptoms. Please flag to your hand therapist if this does not resolve.

Hand therapy advice

Pain

- Use over the counter painkillers regularly at the lowest dose e.g paracetamol.
- Heat: warm water hand baths/ hot water bottle. Heat relaxes muscles, relieves muscle and joint stiffness and achiness. Considering warming up joints before activity, making exercising easier.

Scar

- Once the stitches are removed and the scar has formed, massage to help it stop sticking down.



Swelling

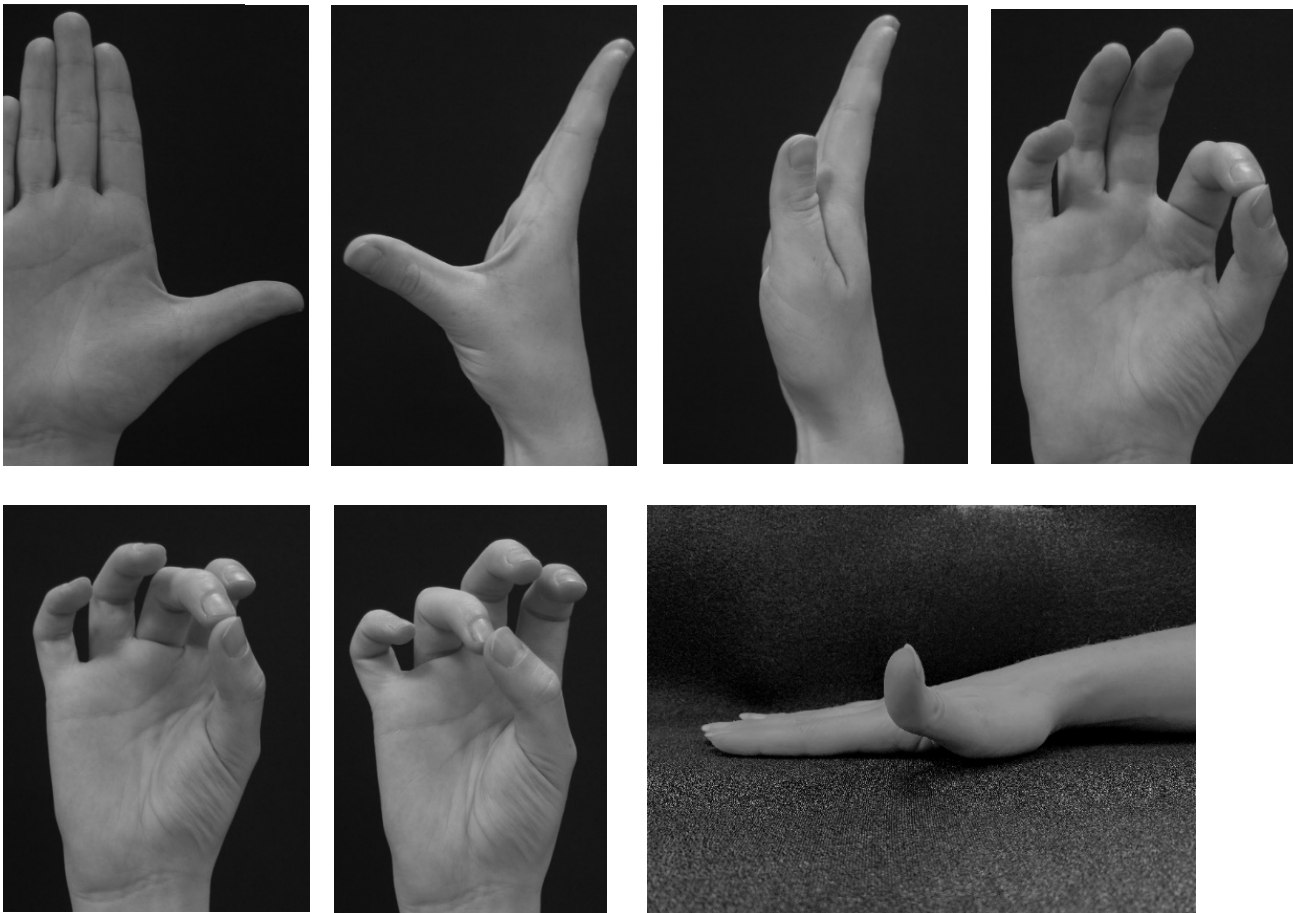
- Elevation, compression and movement.

Splint

- Thumb splint – worn intermittently up to 4 to 8 weeks once the cast has been removed for heavier tasks, periods of rest, not to be worn full time. The shape, material and length of time that people are instructed to wear these splints varies from patient to patient.
- Avoid/ reduce smoking and alcohol/ coffee consumption as these will affect healing times.

Home exercise program guidelines

Until the cast is removed – **10 repetitions, 4 to 5 times a day** – as guided by your hand therapist.



Contacting us

If you have any questions 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.

Sharing your information

King's College Hospital NHS Foundation Trust has partnered with Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust through the King's Health Partners Academic Health Sciences Centre. We are working together to give our patients the best possible care, so you might find we invite you for appointments at Guy's or St Thomas' hospitals. King's College Hospital and Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trusts share an electronic patient record system, which means information about your health record can be accessed safely and securely by health and care staff at both Trusts. For more information **visit www.kch.nhs.uk**

Care provided by students

We provide clinical training where our students get practical experience by treating patients. Please tell your doctor or nurse if you do not want students to be involved in your care. Your treatment will not be affected by your decision.

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