King's College Hospital
NHS Foundation Trust

Dupuytren's post operative management

Information for patients

This leaflet explains what a Dupuytren's contracture is and how it is treated. If you have any queries or concerns, please do not hesitate to speak to the therapist caring for you.

What is a Dupuytren's contracture?

Dupuytren's contracture is a condition where the deep tissue under the skin of the palm thickens and shortens over time, causing one or more fingers (usually the ring and little fingers) to bend inward toward the palm.

Surgery for Dupuytren's contracture

You have had surgery for Dupuytren's contracture. This may have involved removing or releasing the thickened tissue in your palm to help your fingers straighten and move more freely. After surgery, hand therapy is an important part of your recovery. It helps to reduce swelling, keep your fingers moving, and improve the overall function of your hand.

How to care for your hand?

- To reduce the swelling, keep your hand elevated (above the level of your heart). This can be done with the use of a sling during the day and pillows to prop up your hand whilst you are sleeping or sitting.
- Keep your arm joints moving: If you are using a sling, take your arm out and move any unaffected joints every two to three hours.
- Avoid strenuous activities: To reduce the risk of problems after your surgery, do not use your hand for any physically demanding activities until advised by your surgeon or therapist.

Wound care

- First wound check: you need to have this within one week of surgery.
- Stitch removal: if you have stitches which need taking out, you need to have this done 10-14 days after surgery
- Avoid getting the wound wet – cover with a plastic cover when bathing/showering.
- If you notice any signs of infection such as increase in pain, swelling, redness and heat around wound site, or pus please either notify us or, if outside of clinic hours, visit your GP or A&E for it to be reviewed.

Smoking

Avoid smoking after surgery as it increases the risk of your surgery failing and of you developing an infection. It also slows down the healing. If you need help to stop smoking, contact your GP or visit www.nhs.uk/smokefree or call NHS 111.

Avoid/reduce alcohol and coffee consumption as it will affect healing times.

Scar management

- You might experience numbness or even hypersensitivity in your scar. Your scar might be tender to touch, raised, differently textured or pigmented compared to the other areas of your skin.
- Manual Massage: Regular massage in circles and a pinching motion should be done on and around the scar for at least 10 minutes, five times each day can help prevent the scar from "sticking" to the soft tissues beneath it. It also helps to reduce redness and swelling and speed up the flattening. You may use an unscented moisturiser (e.g. Dermatix or E45) when doing this.

Splint

- You will need to wear this at night, the therapist will inform you if daytime splint use is required after the surgery.
- You will then be advised to wear your splint at night for 3 - 6 months (at the discretion of your therapist) to prevent your scar from contracting and causing further contractures.

Common complications

- **Stiffness**: is normal once the cast is removed and can last up to 1 year.
- **Numbness and pins and needles in fingers**: These symptoms should resolve within a few weeks after cast removal.
- **Scar tissue (under the skin):** tendon tethering / nerve tethering (sticking) to the scar tissue.
- **Recurrence of contracture:** There is risk of recurrence in Dupuytren's contracture post treatment – (Fasciectomy recurrence rate of 12-39%, Fasciotomy recurrence of 50 – 58%).

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 - use once advised okay to do so by your therapist.

Exercise

- 5 to 10 repetitions (3 - 5 seconds hold at the end of your range)
- 4 to 5 times a day "A little bit and often".

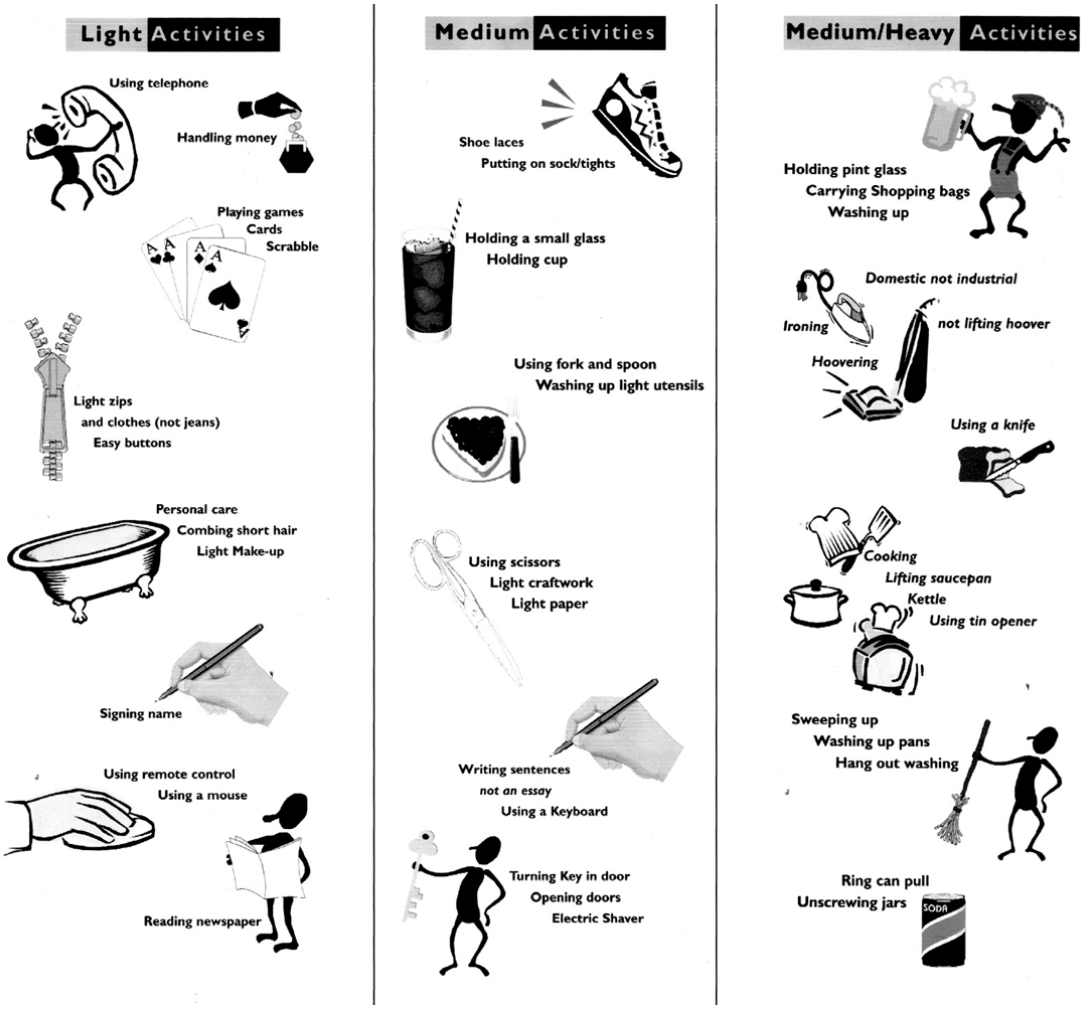
 BIRDBEAK/FLAT PINCH	 FLAT FIST	 HOOK FIST	 FULL FIST

Passive FULL FIST STRETCH

Using unaffected hand and thumb, press fingers into full curled up position. Hold for at least 20 seconds. Repeat 5 - 10.



Hand use



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

www.kch.nhs.uk

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