



Hand or wrist operations: aftercare advice

Information for patients from the Hand Therapy Service

You have had an operation on your hand or wrist. This information sheet provides you with advice on looking after your hand and/or wrist and their dressings at home.

How should I look after my hand/wrist at home?

- **Do not** get your dressings or hand/wrist wet, and **do not** remove your bandages.
- Keep your hand/wrist elevated (raised) for at least 48 hours. It is helpful to keep your sling on during this time.
- Start moving your fingers as soon as they are comfortable, gently moving them towards making a fist, as your dressing allows.
- **Do not** use your other hand to bend or straighten your fingers, unless told to do so by your consultant or therapist.
- After your operation, everyday tasks such as housework may become a problem due to limited movement of your hand or wrist. You are advised to make allowances for this.



What should I do if my hand hurts after surgery?

Pain should be controlled with simple painkillers, which are given to you before you leave the hospital. If you lose feeling in your fingers, they become discoloured or cold, or your hand becomes more painful and you are worried about an infection, then contact the Day Surgery Centre, your GP, or the Accident and Emergency (A&E) department (see phone numbers on the next page).

Your hand and fingers may feel numb for 72 hours after your operation, so you may not feel any pain. We advise that you protect your hands and fingers during this time, until feeling in your skin returns to normal.

When will my stitches be removed?

If they are non-dissolving, your stitches should be removed 10 to 14 days after your operation by your consultant, therapist, or at your GP practice, unless told otherwise by your consultant. This will be discussed with you before you leave hospital.

Will I need a follow-up appointment?

An outpatient appointment to see your consultant, or a therapy appointment following your operation will be sent to you through the post, if appropriate.

When can I drive again?

You should not drive for at least two weeks after your operation.

Insurance policies differ as to the cover provided, so please check with your insurance company before driving after your operation.

When can I return to work?

This varies depending on the work you do. You should discuss this with your GP/consultant.

If you are in a supervisory or managerial position that does not need full use of your hand, you could return to work within a few days of surgery. Other light manual jobs may need two to three weeks off work. Heavy manual jobs may need you to be off work for a few weeks longer.

Further information

If you have any queries or concerns please contact the Day Surgery Centre where you had your surgery.

- **Channel Day Surgery, William Harvey Hospital, Ashford**
Telephone: 01233 61 62 63 (24 hours a day, 7 days a week)
- **Canterbury Day Surgery Centre, Kent and Canterbury Hospital**
Telephone: 01227 78 31 14 (7:30am to 8pm)
Telephone: 07887 68 76 45 (8pm to 7:30am)
- **Day Surgery Unit, Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother Hospital, Margate**
Telephone: 01843 23 44 99 (7:30am to 8pm)
Telephone: 07887 65 11 62 (8pm to 7:30am)

This leaflet has been produced with and for patients

If you would like this information in **another language, audio, Braille, Easy Read, or large print** please ask a member of staff. You can ask someone to contact us on your behalf.

Any complaints, comments, concerns, or compliments please speak to your doctor or nurse, or contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on 01227 78 31 45, or email ekh-tr.pals@nhs.net

Patients should not bring in large sums of money or valuables into hospital. Please note that East Kent Hospitals accepts no responsibility for the loss or damage to personal property, unless the property had been handed in to Trust staff for safe-keeping.

Further patient leaflets are available via the East Kent Hospitals web site www.ekhufft.nhs.uk/patientinformation