



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 leaflet explains:

- how to look after your hand or wrist at home
- what you should do if your hand or wrist hurts after surgery
- whether you will need a follow-up appointment; and
- when you can start driving and return to work.

We hope this leaflet helps to answer some of the questions you may have. If you have any questions or concerns, please speak to a member of your healthcare team.

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

- **Do not get your dressings or hand / wrist wet. Follow the instructions about removing your dressings on your discharge summary.**

- Keep your hand or wrist elevated (raised) for at least 24 hours. Continue to do this if your hand is throbbing or swollen in the days following surgery. It may be helpful to keep your sling on during this time for up to 48 hours.



Examples of good elevation

- Start moving your fingers as soon as possible, unless your discharge summary advises otherwise. This may be uncomfortable to start with. Gently move your fingers towards making a fist, as your dressing allows. Do this regularly to prevent stiffness.
- **Do not** use your other hand to bend or straighten your fingers, unless told to by your consultant or therapist.

- After your operation, everyday tasks (such as housework) may be a problem. This is due to the limited movement of your hand or wrist. You are advised to make allowances for this. For example:
 - ask someone to help with tasks
 - move regularly used items within easy reach; and
 - have ready meals.
- Do not lift anything heavy, until you are told you can by your consultant or therapist.

What should I do if my hand hurts after surgery?

Pain should be controlled with simple painkillers, such as paracetamol.

Contact Day Surgery, your GP, or the Emergency Department, if:

- you lose feeling in your fingers
- your fingers become discoloured or cold; or
- your hand becomes more painful and you are worried about an infection.

The Day Surgery phone numbers are at the end of this leaflet.

You may not feel any pain to start with, as your hand and fingers may feel numb for 72 hours after your operation. Protect your hands and fingers during this time, until feeling in your skin returns to normal.

When will my stitches be removed?

If you have non-dissolving stitches, these should be removed 10 to 14 days after your operation.

Unless your consultant tells you otherwise, non-dissolving stitches will be removed by your:

- consultant
- hand therapist; or
- GP practice.

This will be discussed with you before you leave hospital.

Will I need a follow-up appointment?

If appropriate, you will be sent one of the following appointments through the post:

- an outpatient appointment to see your consultant; or
- a hand therapy appointment.

This will be discussed with you before you leave hospital.

When can I drive again?

You should not drive for at least 2 weeks after your operation. Some operations need a longer recovery period before it is safe to drive. Ask your consultant or therapist for advice.

Insurance policies differ as to the cover they provide. Please check with your insurance company before driving again.

When can I return to work?

This depends on the work you do, whether you drive to work, and what surgery you had. You should discuss this with your GP, consultant, or hand therapist.

- 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.
- Light manual jobs may need 2 to 3 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.

- Canterbury Day Surgery Centre, **Kent and Canterbury Hospital**, Canterbury
Telephone: 01227 783114 (7:30am to 8pm)
Telephone: 07887 687645 (8pm to 7:30am)
- Day Surgery Unit, **Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother (QEQM) Hospital**, Margate
Telephone: 01843 234499 (7:30am to 8pm)
Telephone: 07887 651162 (8pm to 7:30am)
- Channel Day Surgery, **William Harvey Hospital**, Ashford
Telephone: 01233 616263 (24 hours a day, 7 days a week)

What do you think of this leaflet?

We welcome feedback, whether positive or negative, as it helps us to improve our care and services.

If you would like to give us feedback about this leaflet, please fill in our short online survey. Either scan the QR code below, or use the web link. We do not record your personal information, unless you provide contact details and would like to talk to us some more.

Giving feedback about this leaflet



<https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/MDOBU4/>

If you would rather talk to someone instead of filling in a survey, please call the Patient Voice Team.

- **Patient Voice Team**

Telephone: 01227 868605

Email (ekhuft.patientvoice@nhs.net)

This leaflet has been produced with and for patients.

Please let us know:

- If you have any accessibility needs; this includes needing a hearing loop or wanting someone to come with you to your appointment.
- If you need an interpreter.
- If you need this information in another format (such as Braille, audio, large print or Easy Read).

You can let us know this by:

- Visiting the Trust web site (<https://www.ekhuft.nhs.uk/ais>).
- Calling the number at the top of your appointment letter.
- Adding this information to the Patient Portal (<https://pp.ekhuft.nhs.uk/login>).
- Telling a member of staff at your next appointment.

Any complaints, comments, concerns or compliments, please speak to a member of your healthcare team. Or contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service on 01227 783145 or email (ekh-tr.pals@nhs.net).

Patients should not bring 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 has been handed into Trust staff for safe-keeping.

Further patient information leaflets are available via the East Kent Hospitals' web site (<https://www.ekhuft.nhs.uk/patient-information>).

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