

Post-Operative Hand & Wrist Rehabilitation

These multidisciplinary guidelines form the basis of a progressive rehabilitation programme. These are general guidelines for the most common hand & wrist surgical procedures and are not designed to replace sound clinical reasoning. Any specific instructions from the consultant orthopaedic team either verbally or in post-operative notes must take precedence.

Despite the guidelines having timeframes and management suggestions it is important to “support the philosophy that every patient must be managed according to their individual needs and the variable characteristics of injury, surgical findings and lifestyle”.

Thumb CMCJ replacement

	Day 1	2 weeks	4 - 6 weeks	6 - 12 weeks	12 weeks
Advise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • POP thumb spica • Active thumb IPJ flexion-extension if able in POP • Active finger movements to maintain full range • Elevation to minimise swelling • Avoid heavy activity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Removal of sutures • Thermoplastic thumb spica applied • Splint removed for washing hand only. • Scar massage • Avoid heavy activity • Continue IPJ flexion-extension 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue in thermoplastic thumb spica • Splint removed for washing hand only. • Scar massage • Avoid heavy activity • Continue IPJ flexion-extension 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use splint for protection during activity only. • Active full range MCPJ and CMCJ movements including opposition. • Active wrist exercise. • Isometric, progressing to light resisted stability exercise for base of thumb. • Graduated pinch and key grip strengthening • Return to moderate activity e.g. lifting weight of full kettle using thumb splint 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discard splint • Return to full use of hand as able
Avoid	<p>AVOID:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid stress through the thumb joint 				

Hints

- Wound healing occurs at differing rates in different people and the time frames for suture removal and scar management are a guide only.
- Where there is significant pain and swelling, exercises should be kept within comfortable limits during the initial post-operative weeks.
- If there are concerns about wounds, then this should be discussed with the surgeon
- Any concerns about CRPS, then early discussion with the surgeon is recommended