

POST-OPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS

## Extensor Tendon Repair

Hand / Finger Extensor Tendon Repair

Questions or a problem after surgery? Call Dr. Wichman's office at **414-479-7000**.

### Diet

1. Begin with clear liquids and light foods (jello, soup, toast, etc...)
2. Progress slowly back to your pre-op diet as tolerated
3. Try to avoid taking narcotics on an empty stomach to avoid nausea

### Wound Care

1. Keep your dressing and splint clean, dry, and intact. **DO NOT** remove your splint or get it wet unless instructed.
2. It is normal for the hand and fingers to swell after surgery; keep the hand elevated.
3. If blood soaks through the dressing, do not panic. Reinforce with additional dressings as needed.
4. If steri-strips are present, they should remain in place until your first post-operative visit.
5. Cover the hand and splint with a waterproof bag for showering. **NO** immersion in water.

### Medications

1. A local or regional anesthetic block is often used during surgery and will wear off in approximately 8-24 hours. Begin your prescribed pain medication before the block fully wears off so you stay ahead of the pain.
2. Most patients will require a short period of narcotic pain medication. This should be taken as directed on the bottle.
3. Norco (hydrocodone/Tylenol) or Percocet (oxycodone/Tylenol)
4. Take 1-2 tablets every 4-6 hours as needed for pain.
5. Maximum of 12 pills per 24 hour period.
6. Do **NOT** take additional Tylenol (acetaminophen) while taking these medications. Many products contain this medication (cough meds, cold meds) and can lead to liver damage.
7. Common side effects of narcotic pain medications are nausea, drowsiness, and constipation. Use a stool softener (Colace, senokot) or laxative (Miralax) as needed.
8. If you are having problems with nausea and vomiting, call the office to see if the medication should be changed or additional medications prescribed.
9. Journavx (suzetrigine): If you were prescribed Journavx, take 2 tablets (your one-time starting dose) with a small sip of water before leaving home the morning of surgery. Then take 1 tablet every 12 hours, starting 12 hours after your first dose, as directed. Take the starting dose on an empty stomach, and avoid grapefruit while taking this medication.
10. Do not drive a car or operate heavy machinery while taking narcotics.

## Activity

1. Keep the hand elevated above the level of your heart as much as possible to reduce swelling.
2. Do NOT lift, push, pull, grip forcefully, or bear weight with the operative hand.
3. Keep the splint on at all times. The splint holds the finger and/or wrist straight to protect the tendon repair.
4. You may use your opposite hand and return to light, one-handed activity as tolerated.

## Splint

1. Your splint will be worn full-time, typically for about 6 weeks, then weaned under the direction of your hand therapist (often discontinued around 8-10 weeks).
2. Do not remove or adjust the splint on your own.
3. Your first dressing and splint change is usually done by your hand therapist, who will fit a lighter custom splint.

## Ice Therapy

1. Begin immediately after surgery
2. Use ice packs every 2 hours for 20 minutes (keep ice off the dressing/splint and protect the skin to avoid frostbite).

## Hand Therapy

1. Hand therapy is essential after an extensor tendon repair. Attend all appointments — your therapist guides your motion program and adjusts your splint.
2. Your therapist will start a controlled motion program (early protected motion or scheduled exercises) based on your specific repair.
3. No resistance or strengthening until after about 6 weeks, and only as directed. Full activity is typically resumed around 3 months.

## When to Call Us

**Contact Dr. Wichman at 414-479-7000 if any of the following are present:**

- Painful swelling or numbness
- Unrelenting pain
- Redness around incisions
- Fever (above 101.5°F) - It is not uncommon to have a low-grade fever for the first day or two following surgery.
- Color changes in fingers, hand, or arm
- Continuous drainage or bleeding from incisions (a small amount of drainage is expected.)
- Difficulty breathing
- Excessive nausea or vomiting

*If you have an emergency after hours or over the weekend, call 414-479-7000 to be connected to the "on-call" physician or physician assistant. Do NOT call the hospital or surgery center.*

*If you have an emergency that requires immediate attention, call 911 or proceed to the nearest Emergency Room.*