



York and Scarborough
Teaching Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Physiotherapy advice following your Trapeziectomy

Information for patients, relatives and carers

① For more information, please contact:
Orthopaedic Clinic on 01904 726537

Contents	Page
Your recovery	3
Range of movement exercises	5
Strengthening exercises (to start at eight weeks)	8
What else can I do to help my hand heal after surgery?	9
Massage.....	9
Therapy	10
Contrast bathing	10
Physiotherapy.....	10
Tell us what you think of this leaflet	11
Teaching, training and research.....	11
Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS).....	11
Leaflets in alternative languages or formats	12

Your recovery

After your operation, you will have to wear a cast for around four weeks. Continue to move your shoulder, elbow and fingers (making a fist above your head) while you are in the cast to stop these joints becoming stiff and painful.

Continue to elevate your hand when resting and walking in order to reduce swelling.

At four weeks, usually, (dependant on your surgical team's preference) your cast will be removed, and you will be given a removable splint to wear. By this time, your stitches will have been removed and the scar fully healed.

Massage your scar with non-perfumed moisturising lotion (E45) using small circular motions with gentle pressure.

You will need to remove the splint to do your exercises, weaning off using the splint so that you no longer need it at all by twelve weeks after your surgery.

It is very important that you work on getting your movement back as soon as you come out of plaster. The exercises on the attached sheet will help you do this.

Take your splint off every two hours to perform the range of movement exercises. Wear the splint to perform your activities of daily living.

At six weeks post op your splint may be discarded during the day for light duties (e.g. lifting a cup of tea) but continue to wear your splint at night and for heavier activities.

Ten weeks post op – use your splint as comfort and pain dictate. Start performing moderate activities without splint (e.g. weight of a half full kettle).

Twelve weeks post op – the aim is to discard your splint. Perform any range of movement or strengthening exercises that are still required. Return to function.

Range of movement exercises

When your nurse or physiotherapist advises, start the following exercises. Build these up gradually over the next six weeks.

Repeat all exercises five to 10 times, ideally every two hours, but at least three times per day.

Put your thumb against each fingertip in turn; once you can achieve this touch the middle of each finger then the bottom of each finger.



Practise picking up small objects.

Place the palm of your hand on a table.

Bring your thumb away from the index finger and then back again.

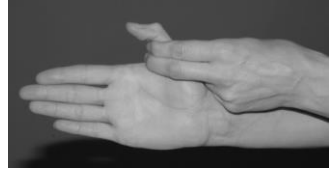


Place edge of hand on table, down towards the ground. Take thumb away from index finger and back again.



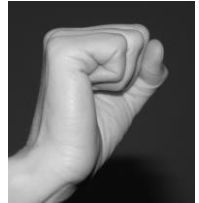
Hold your thumb below the joint to be exercised.

Bend and straighten the upper joint.



Fully extend your wrist.

Try to extend your wrist even more and hold for about 10 seconds.



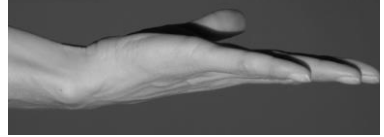
Forearm supported on a table with your hand over the edge and palm facing down.

Let your hand drop down.

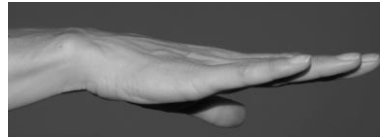
Gently assist the movement with your other hand. Hold for 10 seconds.



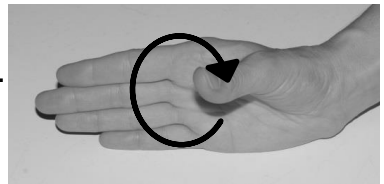
Stand with your elbow bent by your side at a right angle and palm turned down.



Turn your palm up and down rotating your forearm.



Hold all fingers straight.
Make a big circle with your thumb.



Strengthening exercises (to start at eight weeks)

Repeat all exercises 10 times.

Squeeze a soft ball (or a thick pair of socks) between your thumb and index finger.

Hold for five seconds.



Place a soft ball (or a thick pair of socks) into the palm of your hand.

Make a fist and squeeze the ball tightly.

Hold for five seconds.



What else can I do to help my hand heal after surgery?

It is normal for you to get some swelling following hand or upper arm surgery. Some patients are more likely to get swelling than others.

If you have swelling, it may be very tender especially when pressure is applied to the area. You could also have 'pins and needles' in your fingers.

Opening doors, holding knives and forks and using certain types of taps can be painful to use, this is normal.

Once your skin is healed, you can help to disperse the swelling by using the following massage technique two to three times a day.

Massage

Use the tip of your thumb on the opposite hand, then using slight pressure within the limits of comfort, without lifting the pressure off, move the thumb in a circular movement. You can use hand cream to help with comfort.

Spend 20 seconds in each area and push swelling away from the hand. Cover the line of the scar as well as the tissues which are swollen either side of the scar. This activity helps to disperse any swelling of the soft tissue in addition to softening the scar tissue.

Therapy

It will also help the recovery of the swelling if you continue with the post-op exercises you were given to do at the time of your discharge.

The time it takes for swelling to settle is very variable, it can take several months to disappear completely.

Contrast bathing

Get two bowls of water, one with hot water as hot as you can tolerate the second bowl with iced water. Immerse your hand in the hot water for 30 seconds and then switch to the iced water for another 30 seconds. Repeat this until the waters get to room temperature. This stimulates the circulation in your hand.

Physiotherapy

We will refer you for support if required with your rehabilitation and some follow up clinics have a qualified physiotherapist to support you at your follow up appointments.

Tell us what you think of this leaflet

We hope that you found this leaflet helpful. If you would like to tell us what you think, please contact:

Jayne Lenighan, Advanced Practitioner,
Hand Surgery, Orthopaedics, York Hospital, Wigginton
Road, York, YO31 8HE, telephone 01904 726537.

Teaching, training and research

Our Trust is committed to teaching, training and research to support the development of health and healthcare in our community. Healthcare students may observe consultations for this purpose. You can opt out if you do not want students to observe. We may also ask you if you would like to be involved in our research.

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS offers impartial advice and assistance to patients, their relatives, friends and carers. We can listen to feedback (positive or negative), answer questions and help resolve any concerns about Trust services.

PALS can be contacted on 01904 726262, or email yhs-tr.patientexperienceteam@nhs.net.

An answer phone is available out of hours.

Leaflets in alternative languages or formats

If you would like this information in a different format, including braille or easy read, or translated into a different language, please speak to a member of staff in the ward or department providing your care.

Patient Information Leaflets can be accessed via the Trust's Patient Information Leaflet website:
www.yorkhospitals.nhs.uk/your-visit/patient-information-leaflets/

Owner	Jayne Lenighan, Advanced Practitioner
Date first issued	January 2020
Review Date	September 2027
Version	3 (issued September 2024)
Approved by	T&O Governance
Document Reference	PIL1341 v3

© 2024 York and Scarborough Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust.
All Rights reserved.