



Post-Operative Instructions for Thumb Arthritis Surgery

Purpose of surgery

The goal of the operation is to remove the arthritic bone (trapezium), and reconstruct the ligamentous laxity at the base of the thumb in order to alleviate the pain.

What to expect after surgery?

You will have a dressing and cast that covers the wound on your hand, thumb and lower half of the forearm. . You may have some numbness or tingling of fingers due to the local anesthetic injections used to help control post-operative pain (this should wear off within about 24 hours).

What should you do to help recover?

In order to minimize swelling, it is very important to keep your hand/wrist elevated as best as you can for the first 72 hours after surgery. You can also apply an ice pack or frozen vegetables to the palm side of the dressing to help keep swelling to a minimum. To help your recovery, keep your other, non-operated fingers moving. Attempt to make a fist with your fingers and completely straighten them. Repeat these motions and efforts throughout the day, especially in the first few days following surgery to keep internal scarring from becoming an issue. Your dressing, and discomfort, will limit you; but, we ask that you do the best you can. You will be tender at the incisions. Discomfort in the area of the incision is common, and will improve over the course of a couple of weeks. Take the prescription pain medicine as prescribed for the first day and decide the next to what extent you need it. Keeping yourself comfortable will allow you to keep your fingers moving and minimize internal scarring from the surgery. You may note bruising on your hand and forearm. This is common and will resolve. Ice, elevation, and finger exercises will decrease the bruising in the hand.

There are only a few things we would ask you to pay attention to should they occur: new numbness/tingling, worsening numbness/tingling, increasing pain, stiffness of fingers, progressive redness around the wound, fever. We want you to call us should any of these occur at 514-933-9131 during our open business hours (Monday to Friday 9am - 5pm) OR email us at teanoosh@drtzadeh.com.

How should you take care of your dressing/wound?

Do not remove the dressing/splint and keep clean, dry, and intact for a period of 3 weeks; after which time Dr Zadeh will remove the surgical dressing and splint. Soap and water are an excellent skin cleanser, and it is OK to get everything wet in a shower with running water after your dressing is removed. You may use a light dressing to cover the wound after the first dressing is removed. You will then be referred to a hand therapist who will fabricate a splint and show you finger and thumb exercises to perform at home. You will require regular follow ups with the hand therapist.

What activities can you do?

Following the surgery, your thumb and wrist are immobilized in a splint for 3 weeks. You will be permitted to move the non operated fingers of the hand. However, you will not be allowed to grip/pinch nor lift with the operative hand.

After 3 weeks, when the dressing and cast are removed, you will be referred to a hand therapist who will direct your recovery program and will work with you to help you regain motion, strength, and coordination of the thumb joint for a period of 3 months. Your wrist and thumb will be stiff and exercises will help to regain the flexibility of your joints. Eventually, you will be allowed to pinch/grip as well as lift light weights and perform resistive exercises.

How should my hand respond to the surgery?

This surgery is usually very successful and routinely dramatically relieves the pain and discomfort at the base of the thumb. However, it is very common for patients to complain that their thumb does not “feel like their thumb” after surgery. It has usually taken many years for the severe arthritis and ligamentous laxity at the base of the thumb to develop. Many people have become accustomed to how their thumb has felt. It takes a while for the body to get used to the “operated” thumb. Patients frequently note that although their pain is gone, it takes several months before their thumb feels like a “normal thumb”. After surgery, your pinch and grip strength will continue to improve with time, with continued strength improvements noted seven years or more after surgery. Hand therapy is crucial in the recovery of your hand function.

Contact the office immediately for severe pain, elevated temperature, or any sign of infection. **Should you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to call or email our office.**

Phone : (514) 933-9131

Email : contact@drtzadeh.com

Emergency email : teanoosh@drtzadeh.com

Typical exercises to practice post surgery



1. Straighten Fingers



2. Knuckle Bend w/
Straight Fingers



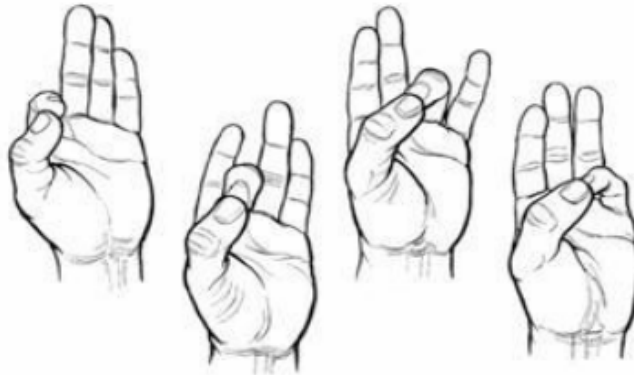
3. Karate Chop
(90/90 position)



4. Closed Fist



5. Open & Closed Fingers



5. Thumb to Finger Touch
Finish at Palm Crease