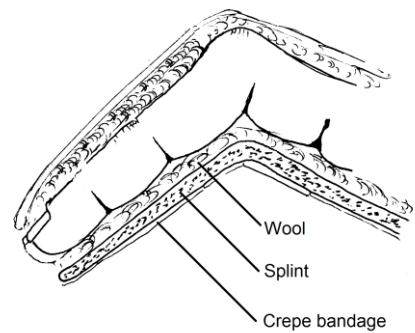


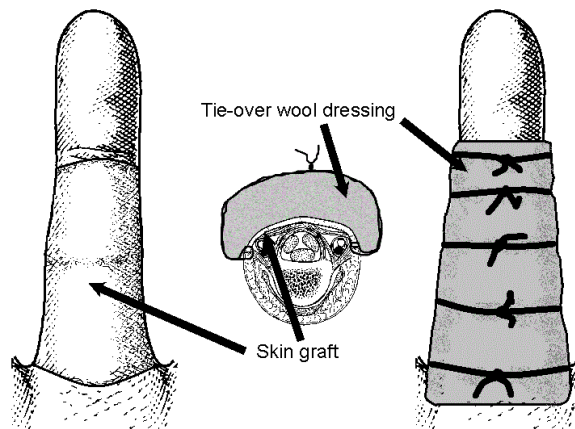
POST-OPERATIVE ADVICE FOR DERMOFASCIECTOMY PATIENTS

Your hand has been placed in a dressing that holds the hand in the optimum position for comfort and to prevent joint stiffness. It is helpful to straighten and spread the fingers occasionally off the splint "platform". Hand elevation is important to prevent swelling and stiffness of the fingers. You may have been discharged with a sling. This should be removed regularly to allow you to exercise the shoulder and elbow to avoid stiffness. However, remember not to walk with your hand dangling, or to sit with your hand held in your lap in the first week or so after your operation. You will have a small dressing on the upper arm where the graft was taken. This can be removed after five days.



You will be reviewed at about one week after surgery when the hand dressing will be removed. The operation area will usually be left open at this stage except for the skin graft itself, which is protected by a "tie-over" dressing of wool until 10-14 days after surgery.

Once the first dressing is removed, you will see the Hand Therapist who will fit you with a splint. The splint will protect and rest the skin-graft, which at this stage does not like movement. It is advisable to place a piece of gauze on the splint and between adjacent fingers to prevent sweating and/or skin maceration, which encourage infection. You can use the rest of the hand for occasional gentle activities but no more. You are strongly advised to lead a quiet life during the early weeks of healing.



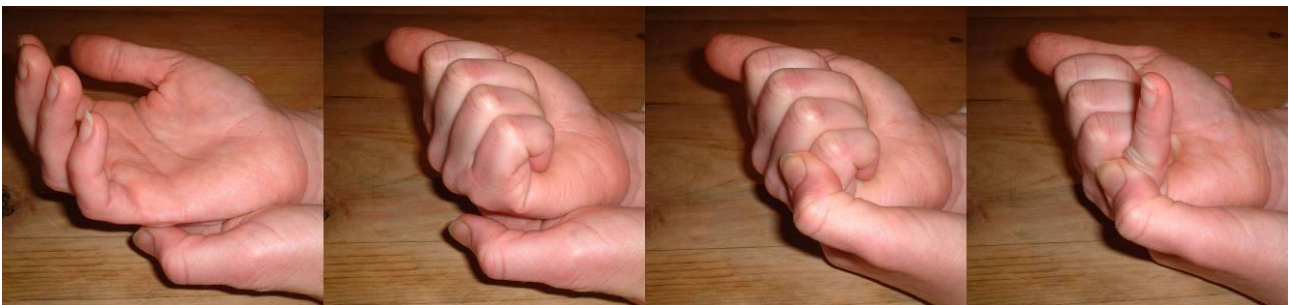
The tie-over dressing will be removed after about 10-14 days to allow the graft to be checked. Initially, the graft is very bruised and flat but eventually it will fill out. You will be allowed to remove the splint during the day as the operated area will benefit from periods of exposure to the air whilst you are sitting quietly. Do not attempt to use the hand for house-work, DIY, driving or anything at all demanding as excess use threatens the survival of the graft. Return to the gym, running or other sports are not advised at this stage even if they do not involve the hand.

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Once the tie-over dressing is removed, it is safe to get the hand wet in a bath or shower but avoid contact with soap, shampoo or dirty water. Wounds and the surrounding skin can become dry and flaky. If this occurs, briefly immerse the whole hand in water to which a small quantity of baby-oil has been added. Commercial moisturisers are best avoided until wounds have healed as they can cause irritation. Your stitches will be dissolving by about two weeks after surgery but wounds are not sealed until a further week. During this time, avoid contact with livestock and agricultural environments, including gardening. Gloves are no protection against the risk of infection.

The splint needs to be worn at night and at times in the day if you feel the hand is vulnerable to knocks (out shopping, grand-children visiting, etc.). The graft often remains rather delicate until three weeks after surgery. Look out for any redness or tenderness in the area, which might indicate an infection. Do not apply antiseptic which can damage skin grafts but please contact us if you have any worries.

If the graft looks satisfactory, gentle movements of the operated fingers will be started, usually at two to three weeks. The diagrams show the most effective way of recovering finger movements. By first bending the knuckle joint, finger extension can be achieved more efficiently and without stretching the graft. To not force the finger either fully straight or bent at this stage. If there is bleeding at the edge and/or blistering of the graft, we would suggest that the exercises should be eased off.



You can usually begin using the hand for normal activities including driving a car after about four weeks as long as the graft is satisfactory, you are comfortable and you have regained good finger movements.

Once healed, the scar may become lumpy, firm, tender and pink, which can be helped by massaging the scar and surrounding area firmly with a moisturizing cream of your choice. Some splinting at night will be necessary for at least twelve weeks to help keep the finger straight during the later stages of healing. Timing of your return to work is variable according to your occupation and you should discuss this.