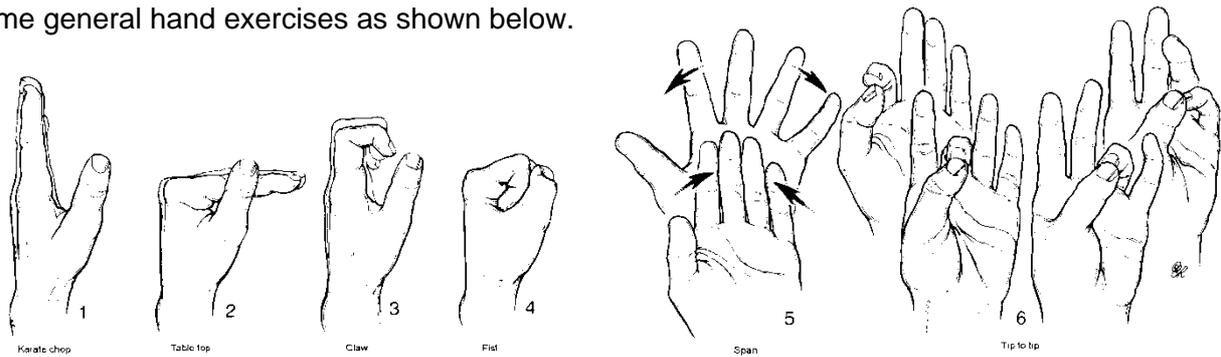


HAND SURGERY

Local anaesthetic has been injected around the site of operation and therefore this area and the nearby fingers will remain numb for up to ten hours after surgery. As this effect wears off, it may well be worth taking some pain-killers.

Hand elevation is important to prevent swelling and stiffness of the fingers but remember to keep the shoulder and elbow mobile. Do 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. The hand can be lowered for light use as guided by common sense in relation to the environment and task performed. You can perform some general hand exercises as shown below.



You have been discharged with a supportive dressing. Please remove the entire dressing after seven days and inspect the wounds. There obviously will be some swelling and bruising around the wound but this is normal. Look out for any redness or tenderness in the area around the wound that might indicate an infection. Do not apply antiseptic but ask for medical advice.

Once dressings are 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.

A return to driving requires you to have regained full finger movements and to have sufficient power to control the vehicle. It also depends on the position of wounds and the type of vehicle. Contact of wounds with control surfaces too soon after surgery will delay healing. Timing of your return to work is variable according to your occupation and requires some judgement.

Once healed, scars may become lumpy, firm, tender and pink. The intensity and length of the period of "scar immaturity" is very variable and may take many months to settle. It can be helped by massaging scars and surrounding area firmly with the moisturizing cream.

We have not arranged for follow-up but would like to be involved in dealing with any problems. If you are worried about the wound, stiffness, pain or any other symptoms, ring the hospital for advice, review or an appointment.