

Physical therapy after flexor tendon repair

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The following is based on the Kleinert protocol for rehabilitation of fingers after flexor tendon repair. Please take time to read it.

This protocol is meant to help the rehabilitation, but is not a substitute for a proper therapy program. In fact, as your surgeon, I welcome therapists' input and suggestions.

If you should have any concerns or questions during the rehabilitation phase, do not hesitate to contact me.

Week One

1. Elevate, whenever possible
2. Start formal physical therapy within the first week (crucial step!!)
3. Tendon gliding exercises
 1. Passive flexion of the involved finger(s)
 2. Active extension
 3. Synergistic wrist flexion associated with finger extension, followed by wrist extension and the natural finger flexion that occurs
 4. If you have a blocking splint at the wrist, the motion will be limited to an appropriate extent by this splint; do not fight the splint
4. Repeat tendon gliding exercises at home, 50 times each hour

Week Two

1. Remove sutures at about 10 days after surgery
2. Scar massage
3. Continue with the exercises as during the first week

Week Three

1. New exercise: "Place and hold"
 1. Passively flex the finger
 2. Hold it in flexion briefly, using minimal effort
2. Scar massage

Week Four

1. Continue all exercises as above
2. Gentle passive extension (if necessary)
3. Therapist may use silicone sleeves for edema control

Week Five - Eight

1. Gentle resistive exercise can start to differentiate FDS/FDP gliding

After 8 weeks

1. May start strengthening
2. Work conditioning