



# Median or Ulnar Nerve Repair

## Patient Postoperative Instructions

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### **0-2 weeks**

#### Pain medication:

- Use your prescription pain medication as needed to control pain.
- If your arm was numbed (blocked) for the surgery by the anesthesiologist, begin taking pain medication before the block wears off.
- Do not drive or operate machinery while taking narcotic/opioid pain medication.
- Unless you cannot take them for other medical reasons, it is ok to use over-the-counter anti-inflammatory medication (e.g. Advil or Aleve) in addition to your prescription pain medication. Do not take tylenol as your prescription already contains this medication.

#### Post-op Dressings:

- Keep the dressings and splint in place until your first postoperative visit.
- Elevation of the hand, along with ice on-and-off for 20 minutes at a time, will help with swelling and pain.
- It is ok to shower, but the dressings must stay clean and dry. Place a waterproof covering over the dressings while bathing or showering (such as a heavy plastic bag that is sealed with Saran wrap).
- If the dressings get dirty, wet, or come apart please contact the office to have the dressing re-done.

#### Motion:

- Start moving your fingers that are not in the splint as soon as possible.
- You can use your hand for light activity, such as eating, drinking, or using a computer, but avoid lifting/carrying/pushing anything heavier than a glass of water or can of soda.
- Increase activity as your symptoms allow.

### **2-6 weeks (First post-op visit)**

#### Incision care:

- The postoperative splint and stitches will be removed at your 2-week visit.
- You will be referred to hand therapy for a removable splint to protect the nerve repair and help improve hand function.
- It is ok to let water run over your incision, but do not immerse or soak it.
- Scar massage can be performed starting at 3 weeks after surgery.

#### Motion:

- Therapy will be started for finger active range of motion exercises.

### **6-10 weeks (Second post-op visit)**

#### Splint

- The forearm splint will be converted to a hand-based splint, which should be worn at rest or while sleeping until your nerve function recovers.

#### Motion:

- Passive stretching exercises out of the splint are started.
- Gentle strengthening exercises are started at 8 weeks.

### **10+ weeks (Third post-op visit)**

No further therapy beyond normal use of the hand should be required at this point. There are no activity restrictions unless otherwise discussed on a case-by-case basis. Note that nerve recovery occurs over a 6-12 month period after the surgery, and is typically partial rather than complete.