# Patient information

**NHS**
**East Sussex Healthcare**
**NHS Trust**

## Thumb MCP Joint Soft Tissue Injury     Hand 10

### Fracture Care Team: Shared Care Plan

Trust Switchboard for both sites:  0300 131 4500
Fracture clinic and orthopaedic outpatient appointments:
Eastbourne 0300 131 4788
Conquest 0300 131 4861
Casting Department: Eastbourne  0300 131 5564
Casting Department: Conquest 0300 131 4860

This information leaflet explains the ongoing management of your injury.

**You have injured your soft tissues around the joint at the bottom of your thumb. This is known as the Metacarpal Phalangeal (MCP) Joint - see below.**

| | |
|---|---|
| **Healing:** | This normally takes approximately 4-6 weeks to heal. |
| **Pain and swelling:** | Take your normal painkillers if you are in pain. You may find it continues to be a bit achy and swollen for a few months after your injury. |
| **Using your hand:** | You may use the hand as pain allows. You may have been given a splint; this is to make you more comfortable it does not change how the fracture heals. It is important to use the hand and keep the fingers bending to stop them becoming stiff. |
| **Follow up:** | We do not routinely follow up these injuries However, if you continue to have pain or are limited in what you can do please get in contact with us on the above number or e mail. |

### Area of injury
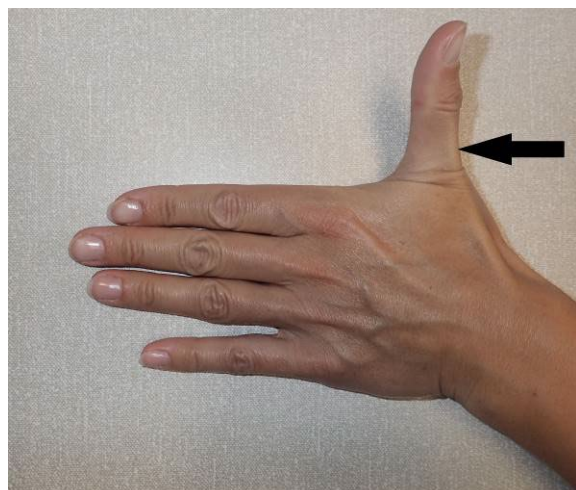


If you are worried that you are unable to follow this rehabilitation plan,

**Or** if you are experiencing pain or symptoms, other than at the site of the original injury or surrounding area,

**Or** have any questions, please phone the Fracture Care Team on the details provided above for advice.

## Specific cases with a different approach

Usually, the soft tissue injury settles over several weeks. If the injury includes a complete rupture of 'Ulnar Collateral Ligament' on the index finger side and causes instability, a more rigid splint, or an operation to repair it may be advised. (This is sometimes called *skier's thumb* or *gamekeeper's thumb* or *U.C.L. injury*)

## Please follow the plan:

| Weeks since injury | Plan |
|---|---|
| 0 - 3 | ✔ Use the splint if supplied to make it more comfortable <br> ✔ You may also wish to use it in busy areas where it may get knocked <br> ✔ Do the initial exercises below but work with in your pain limits <br> ✔ Keep your fingers moving to prevent stiffness |
| 3 - 6 | ✔ Try not to use the splint <br> ✔ Try to use your injured thumb - see exercises stage 2 below |
| 6 - 12 | ✔ The injury has healed. <br> ✔ Return to normal activities |
| 12 | ✖ If you are still experiencing significant pain and swelling then please contact the Fracture Care Team for advice. |

## Advice for a new injury

**Cold packs:**

A cold pack (ice pack or frozen peas wrapped in a damp towel) can provide short-term pain relief.

Apply this to the sore area for up to 15 minutes, every few hours. The ice must never be in direct contact with the skin.

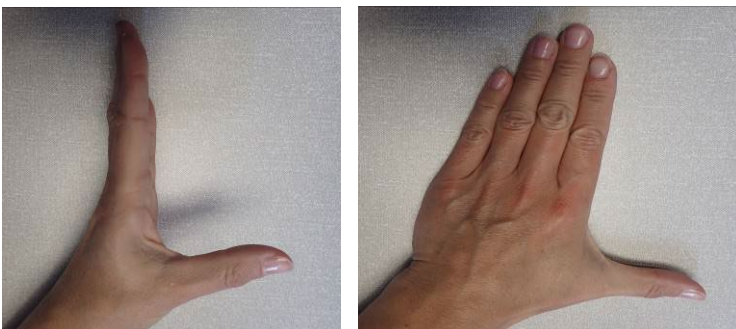# Initial exercises – to start straight away as pain allows

Do these exercises several times a day
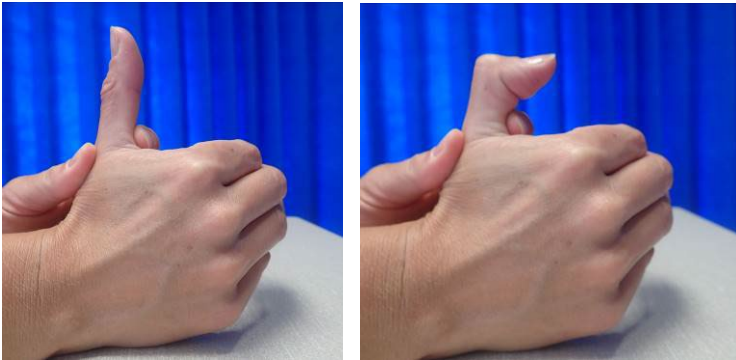


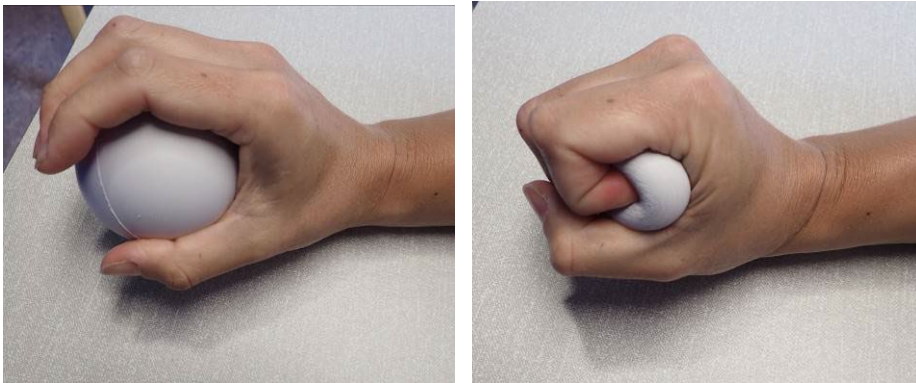Use your other hand to keep your thumb steady and bend and straighten the joint.

Repeat x 5

With your hand on its side (thumb up) move your thumb out into an L shape.
Repeat x 5

Lie your palm flat on a table and move your thumb out to the side and back.
Repeat x 5



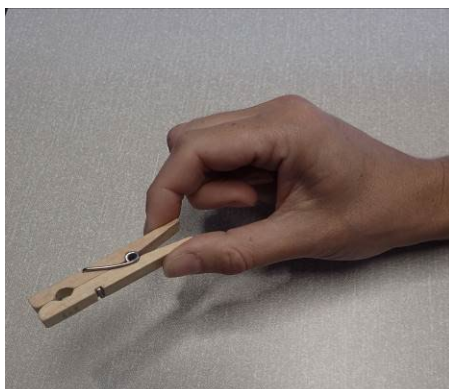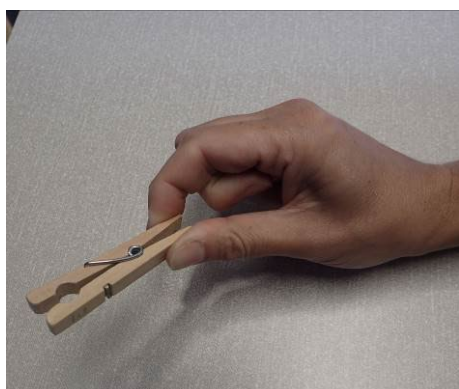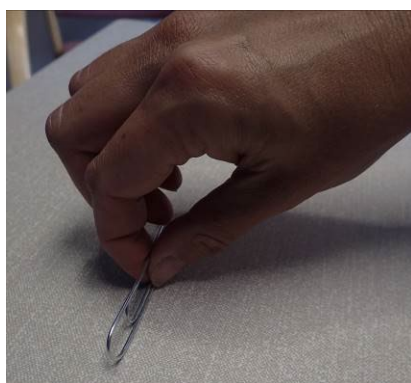Squeeze a soft ball, playdough, plastic bottle or similar item.

Do this for 30-60 seconds.

## Stage 2 exercises – to start from 6 weeks after your injury
Continue with initial exercises as well.



Practice hand movements, here are some examples; turning keys, picking up small objects, doing crafts or anything that involves using your hands.



Practice your pinch grip; squeeze objects such as clothes pegs.

## Sources of information

This information leaflet has been developed by the Fracture Care Team at Brighton and Sussex University Hospitals Fracture Care Team and adapted for use at East Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust. Information updated during the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure that patients with injuries have information, support and care despite social distancing.

## Important information

This patient information is for guidance purposes only and is not provided to replace professional clinical advice from a qualified practitioner.

## Your comments

We are always interested to hear your views about our leaflets. If you have any comments, please contact the patient experience team on 0300 131 4784 or esh-tr.patientexperience@nhs.net.

## Hand hygiene

We are committed to maintaining a clean, safe environment. Hand hygiene is very important in controlling infection. Alcohol gel is widely available at the patient bedside for staff use and at the entrance of each clinical area for visitors to clean their hands before and after entering.

## Other formats

**If you require any of our leaflets in alternative formats, such as large print or alternative languages, please contact the Equality and Human Rights Department on 0300 131 4434 or esh-tr.AccessibleInformation@nhs.net**

After reading this information are there any questions you would like to ask?  Please list below and ask your nurse, practitioner or doctor.

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_____
_____


## Reference

Thank you to the Brighton and Sussex University Hospitals NHS Trust and to Kate Weatherly, Specialist Orthopaedic Physiotherapist for the first version.

**This leaflet can also be found at: www.esht.nhs.uk/leaflet/thumb-mcp-joint-soft-tissue-injury/**

The following clinicians have been consulted and agreed this patient information:

Mr Guy Selmon – Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon
Mr Andrew Skyrme – Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon
Prof Scarlett McNally - Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon
Miss Miranda Champion - Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon
Helen Harper-Smith – Professional Lead Physiotherapist
Hilary Kircher – Clinical / Operational Lead Outpatient Physiotherapist

The Clinical Specialty/Unit that have agreed this patient information leaflet:
Diagnostic, Anaesthetic and Surgery - Department of Trauma and Orthopaedics

Next review date:              September 2025
Responsible clinician/author:   Helen Harper-Smith – Professional Lead Physiotherapist
                                Prof Scarlett McNally – Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon