



After Your Dupuytren's Contracture Release Surgery

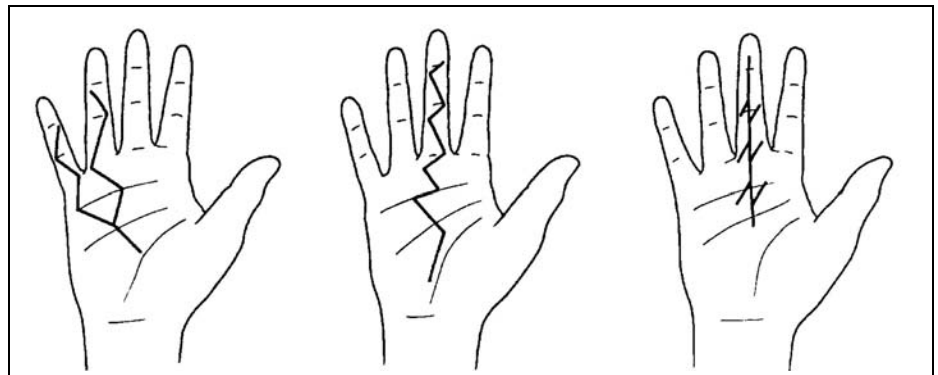
Self-care and follow-up

This handout explains follow-up care after surgery to ease a condition called Dupuytren's contracture.

If your incisions are red or there is drainage coming from them, call us right away at the phone numbers listed on the last page. Go to the emergency room if this occurs at night or on a weekend.

Wound Care

- Right after your surgery, a bulky dressing (bandage) and a plaster splint will be placed on your hand. You will not be able to move your fingers or your wrist while this splint is on.
- You will have your first therapy visit 3 to 5 days after your surgery. At this visit, the bulky dressing will be removed. Your hand therapist will make you an extension splint to wear at night. Your therapist will also manage your incisions, if needed, and teach you how to change your dressings.
- After you start therapy, your dressing must be changed every day. If possible, have a family member or friend come with you to your first therapy session to learn how to change your dressing.
- Do **not** soak your incisions in water. When bathing, use a plastic bag over your hand to keep your incisions dry and protect them until your sutures are removed, 2 to 3 weeks after surgery. Most times, we remove only half the sutures at a time so that gaps do not form in the incision.
- Do **not** put any lotion or ointment, such as Neosporin, on your wounds.
- After this surgery, some patients have minor skin-healing problems. If this occurs, your occupational therapist will help you manage them.



Surgical incisions for Dupuytren's contracture release surgery

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Pain Management

- You will receive a prescription for narcotic pain medicine. Take this medicine only if you need it.
- Be sure to talk with the clinic nurse about how to take your pain medicine. To best manage your pain, you must take your pain medicine the way it was prescribed. Taking the correct dose at the right time is very important.
- If you have uncomfortable side effects from the pain medicine, call the nurse at 206-598-4263.
- Please see “Medications After Surgery” for more instructions.

Driving

- Do **not** drive if you are taking narcotic pain medicine. It is not safe. The medicine can make you sleepy and delay your reaction time.
- Once you are no longer taking the medicine, you may drive as soon as you can comfortably grip the steering wheel with both hands.

Occupational Therapy

- One of the biggest concerns after surgery for Dupuytren's contracture is preventing stiffness of the fingers. To help, we advise starting hand therapy 1 to 5 days after surgery.
- Your therapist will make a splint that helps keep your fingers straight. Wear this splint at night, or as directed by your therapist.

Doing things that flex your fingers and making a fist on a regular basis will help prevent stiffness. Your therapist will show you exercises to do at home as part of your daily exercise program.

- You may need therapy sessions for up to 3 months after your surgery. You will likely have therapy once a week for 6 to 8 weeks. If your range of motion is improved at that time, you may see the therapist every 2 weeks for 4 to 6 more weeks.
- If you live nearby, we will arrange for you to have your therapy at the Exercise Training Center, which is next to the Hand Center. If you live farther away, we will try to find a therapist in your area.

Follow-up

- When you leave the surgery center, you should have a follow-up appointment in the Hand Center already set for 10 to 14 days after surgery.
- You should also have an appointment to return for occupational therapy in 1 to 5 days. Please take pain medicine before your first therapy visit. Your dressing will be removed at this visit.

Questions or Concerns?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or health care provider if you have questions or concerns. UWMC clinic staff are also available to help.

Weekdays, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.: Call the Hand Center at **206-598-4263**.

After office hours and on weekends and holidays: Call the hospital operator at **206-598-6190**. Ask for the Hand Fellow on call to be paged. Your call will be returned.

For more information, please visit the Hand Center online at www.uwhand.com.

- You will need to have many dressing changes and therapy visits in the weeks after surgery. Please avoid planning any trips that take you away from the Seattle area for more than 3 days at a time. Ask your therapist if you have any questions about this.

Activity

After all the incisions have healed, you may increase your activities as tolerated. Heavier activities now will help soften your scar. Your therapist will also give you instructions and supplies to help soften your scar.

Results

Most patients have a big improvement in their finger movement and in most of their finger or thumb contractures after surgery. But, small contractures may still occur, especially for the small finger.

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