



After Your Triangular Fibrocartilage Complex (TFCC) Repair Surgery

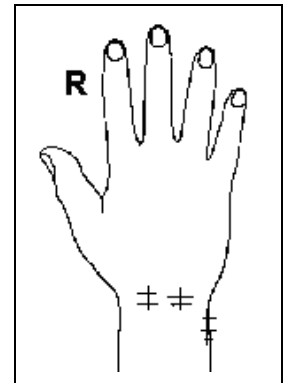
Self-care and follow-up

This handout explains follow-up care after surgery to repair *triangular fibrocartilage complex* (TFCC). The TFCC is a small piece of cartilage and ligaments on the little-finger side of the wrist.

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

Wound Care

- The incisions for repair of your *triangular fibrocartilage complex* (TFCC) are fairly small.
- After the surgery, your hand and wrist will be placed in a plaster splint. This splint helps protect the TFCC while it heals and also lessens swelling.
- When bathing, keep the splint clean and dry by covering it with a plastic bag.
- Your wrist and palm may swell. Use an ice pack for up to 20 minutes at a time over the surgical site to help lessen swelling. Be sure to place a thin cloth between your skin and the ice pack to protect your skin.
- Elevate your hand as much as possible to lessen swelling and pain.



The incision sites on the back of a right hand.

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.

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.

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.

Activity

- Move your fingers often to help prevent stiffness. Try to completely bend and straighten your fingers 5 or 6 times a day.
- Because you won't be using your arm for your everyday activities, also exercise your shoulder several times a day by raising your arm overhead. This will help lessen stiffness in your shoulder.
- You can use your hand for daily tasks such as getting dressed, typing, combing your hair, preparing food, and other light activities.
- Do **not** lift anything heavier than a full soda can (about 1 pound or .45 kilogram) until your sutures have been removed.

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. At this visit:

- Your sutures will be removed.
- Your hand will be placed in a removable splint.
- You may also be referred to physical therapy to learn exercises to do at home. These exercises will lessen scarring around the incisions and help increase your hand strength and range of motion.
- After the sutures have been removed, you can increase your activities as tolerated. Avoid heavy repetitive activities such as hammering until 4 to 6 weeks after surgery.

Results

Most patients who have TFCC repair surgery regain full use of their hand with full return of motion and strength.

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