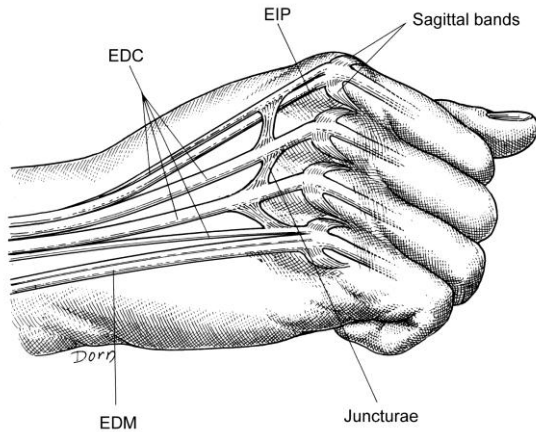


EXTENSOR TENDON REALIGNMENT

The extensor tendons that straighten your fingers normally lie right over the heads of the metacarpal bones at the knuckles. They are stabilised in this position by ligaments (sagittal bands) and inter-communications (juncturae) between each tendon in the back of the hand.



If these stabilising structures are damaged, the tendons can slide to one side of the knuckle. This change in their position alters their line of pull and makes them inefficient at straightening the fingers.



The change in tendon position can have several effects:-

- (i) A snapping sensation as you straighten the finger.
- (ii) An inability to straighten the finger from a bent position.
- (iii) Deviation of the finger away from the thumb.

The problem tends to become worse over time and ultimately the affected fingers can become stuck in a bent position at the knuckle joint (see picture).

Your operation will involve realignment and/or transfer of the tendons.

Your hand will be initially placed in a bulky dressing to rest it. A small tube (drain) may be left in the wound to allow any blood to escape. The dressing and drain will be removed after 24 hours and replaced by a light dressing to allow mobilisation of the fingers.

At this time, you will see the Hand Therapist who will fit you with a splint and instructed you about your exercises. These are along the following lines but may be varied according to your requirements:

You should perform four sets of exercises with your fingers every two hours.



Active finger extensions. Straighten your fingers so that they lift off the splint then:-

Active finger flexions Bend the finger joints only, leaving the knuckle joints straight.

2 weeks Your stitches will be removed

4 weeks You will start using the hand without the protection of the splint during the day for very gentle activities. During this time, you should avoid making a full fist. The splint should still be worn at night and be put on in the day for protection.

6 weeks You can begin to step up activities carefully and you can now attempt a full fist

8 weeks You should be returning to normal daily activities and driving.

12 weeks The operation is strong enough to allow a return to sports and heavy activities.