



**Wrightington, Wigan and  
Leigh Teaching Hospitals**  
NHS Foundation Trust

# **Post-Operative Information Following Ambulatory Hand- Wrist Surgery**

# Post-Operative Information Following Hand and Wrist Surgery

Patient information

## Therapy Department

- Author ID: TG
- Leaflet ref: Tpy 008
- Version: 3
- Leaflet title: Post-Operative Information Following Ambulatory Hand / Wrist Surgery
- Date Produced: September 2025
- Expiry Date: September 2027

## Introduction

This leaflet is designed to guide you through the recovery process after your recent operation.

## Looking after your dressings

You will have a bulky dressing on your hand / wrist which will be soft or have some rigid support. This will depend on the type of operation you have had.

The nursing staff will inform you if you need to reduce/remove your own dressing.

If the dressing feels too tight, raise your hand regularly for long periods (at least half an hour). You can use a pillow to rest your hand on, aiming to raise your hand above your shoulder. If this does not resolve the issue, or if you experience pins and needles and / or see colour changes in the fingers, then you must get in touch with the ward or outpatient team on the numbers provided on page 4. In an emergency, attend your local Emergency Department or Walk in Centre.

If you notice the hand becoming increasingly painful, warm, if you notice any redness in the area, or if you start to feel generally unwell, you must attend your local Emergency Department.

There is a healing surgical wound under your dressing. It is important to keep this clean, dry and undisturbed to minimise the risk of infection. You can shower with a bag over your dressing in order to keep it dry. If you are not advised to change your own dressing, please keep your dressing in place until your next hospital appointment, which will be within 2 weeks.

## How to change your dressing

**Only change your dressings if you have been advised to by the nursing staff.**

**It may be easier if you have somebody to help you to do this.**

1. Wash your hands as fully as you can prior to carrying out the procedure. Use soap, water and dry with a clean towel.
2. Remove outer bandage.
3. Carefully remove adhesive dressing, ensuring you do not touch the wound.
4. Replace with the dressing supplied. Remove the dressing from the outer packaging. Peel off cover underneath and smooth the dressing over the wound. Do not touch the white central pad.

If you have non dissolving stitches, you will have been advised on where to go to have these removed. For patients with dissolving stitches: please note these can take 4-6 weeks to disappear.

## Sensation

After a local anaesthetic, your arm / hand will be numb for a while after you leave the hospital. This should return to normal in a few hours. The nursing staff will inform you when to start taking medications prescribed to help you with the pain control after your operation.

## Swelling

Swelling is normal following an operation however, it is important to keep this under control to minimise complications such as stiffness.

You should raise your hand / arm as much as possible in the first 2 weeks following your operation. You can try resting your hand / arm on additional pillows when sitting or in bed.

## Exercise

It is important to keep good movement in the rest of your arm. You should move all the joints that are not within the bandage, little and often throughout the day, including your shoulder and elbow.

## Scar Care and Sensitivity

When your wound has healed and is dry it is important to start massage.

To do this you must use unscented moisturising cream. Apply a gentle pressure to the length of the scar 3 – 4 times a day for a few minutes each time. This will help the scar heal, flatten and reduces any tenderness.

Some people experience increased sensitivity of the scar, which can be unpleasant. To desensitise the area, you should continue with scar massage and practise touching the area with different textures using different pressures.

## Driving

Do not drive until any stitches have been removed and the wound has healed. You must be certain you have sufficient strength and control to drive safely.

## Follow Up

If your procedure requires post-operative hand therapy, you will be contacted by the Therapy Department within 3 working days with an appointment to attend.

Not all procedures completed at the Ambulatory Theatre will require hand therapy follow up. If you do not need hand therapy, you should receive an appointment with the Consultants' Team between 6-12 weeks.

You should receive your consultant outpatient appointment within 1 week. If you do not receive an appointment through the post, or if you have any problems with your outpatient appointment, please contact: **01257 256222 or 01257 256241.**

## If you have any queries or concerns

Should you be concerned about any of the following...

- Any colour changes
- Redness with heat or burning pain to the operated area
- Further numbness or pins and needles
- Swelling beyond the size of the dressing or splint which has become painful

- Dressing / splint has become too loose or too tight
- Reduced movement
- Scar

**Please do not hesitate to contact us on the following numbers:**

Outpatient Department      **01257 256299**      Monday to Friday 7.30 am until 5pm

Hand Therapy Team      **01257 488272**      Monday to Friday 8am until 4.30pm

Please leave a message on the answerphone and someone will return your call as soon as possible.

**You do not have to wait until your clinic appointment to contact us.**



Version number: **3**  
Last modified date: **13th June 2026**

All rights reserved © 2026  
WWL Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust