De Quervain's Tenosynovitis Surgical Release

Care After Surgery

Surgery for de Quervain's tenosynovitis is done to relieve swelling and pain in the wrist and thumb. The swelling and pain was caused by *inflammation* (the body's way of reacting to injury or infection). The inflammation occurred at the covering (*sheath*) around the *tendons* (tough cords of tissue). The sheath was opened during surgery. This opening gives the tendons more space to move.

Once you recover from the surgery, the pain you used to feel should be improved. Normal movement of your wrist and thumb should return.

Most of the time, surgery for de Quervain's tenosynovitis is an outpatient procedure. That means you will go home the same day.

AFTER SURGERY

- You will stay in a recovery area until the anesthesia has worn off. Your blood pressure and pulse will be checked often. Once your body functions are back to normal, you will be able to go home.
- You will have a splint or brace on your wrist and thumb area.
- The surgeon will give you a prescription for pain medication to keep you comfortable.
- Before you are sent home, you will be shown how to care for the area around the cut (*incision*) that was made during surgery. Make sure you know how often the bandage (*dressing*) should be changed. You also need to know when the splint and dressing can be taken off for good.
- Ask whether you will need physical or occupational therapy. If so, ask about referrals.
- Be patient. It will take a few weeks before you can use your wrist and thumb normally again.

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- Take any medication that your surgeon prescribed. Follow the directions carefully.
- Only take over-the-counter or prescription medicines for pain, discomfort or fever as directed by your caregiver. Do not take aspirin unless directed by your surgeon. Aspirin increases the chances of bleeding.
- For the first few days after your surgery, keep your arm above your heart as much as possible. This can help prevent swelling.
- Do not get the incision wet for several days (or as directed by your surgeon).
- Follow your surgeon's directions for changing the dressing over the incision.
- Wear the splint as directed by your surgeon.
- You may be given simple exercises to do once the splint can be removed during the day. These will keep the wrist from getting stiff and keep it from swelling. The exercises also will help bring back normal movement. When you can move the wrist and thumb normally, you will start doing exercises to make them stronger. You might do these on your own or you might work with a physical or occupational therapist.
- You may need more treatment to help the wrist heal. This could include:
  - Massage.
  - Stimulation of the nerves with electrical waves.
- Do not rush to use your hand before allowed by your surgeon. Using your wrist and thumb before they are healed can cause a delay in recovery.

SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF:

- The incision area becomes red, swollen or feels warm to the touch.

- Blood or pus oozes from the incision.
- The incision smells bad. This could mean it is infected.
- Pain in your wrist or hand increases or it does not get better with pain medicine.
- You have an oral temperature above 102° F (38.9° C).

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You have an oral temperature above 102° F (38.9° C), not controlled by medicine.

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