



HAND AND WRIST SURGERY

VHSA surgeons are trained in plastic or orthopaedic surgery and have undertaken additional training in surgery of the hand and wrist including microsurgery and nerve surgery.

Please take time to read this fact sheet with important information from your surgeon about what you need to do before and after your surgery.

Recovery following surgery to the hand requires your contribution. The aftercare of your hand following surgery can influence the outcome of surgery. Hand therapy is sometimes required and will be arranged by your surgeon.

WHAT TO DO BEFORE YOUR SURGERY

What do I take to hospital?

- X-Rays and any radiological investigations. Your surgery may not proceed without these.
- Bring a list of your medical conditions or allergies.
- Bring a list of your Medications (Certain medications for **Diabetes** and **blood thinners** need to be stopped or altered 3-5 days before surgery. Please discuss with your doctor).
- Documentation about your health fund.

Preparation for surgery

- Clean hands and nails thoroughly.
- Wear loose fitting clothes as your dressings may be bulky.
- Remove your jewellery and leave any valuables at home.

IN HOSPITAL ON THE DAY OF SURGERY

- You will be admitted by the admission clerk and then by the nurses.
- There are many patients having surgery on the list and the order of surgery may need to change due to patient medical needs

and equipment needs. There may also be delays due to emergency operations. These cannot be predicted.

- You will be operated on as soon as possible but some delays may occur at times that are beyond the control of your surgeon.

Day Procedure patients

- Discharge time will vary as you will need to recover from the anaesthetic.
- You must have someone take you home. You will not be allowed to drive or catch a taxi or public transport by yourself even with a local anaesthetic procedure as you may be given sedation.
- We strongly advise that you have someone stay with you for 24 hours after the surgery.

Overnight stay patients

- Discharge time is at approximately 9.30 am the following day.
- As your dressings/plaster and anaesthetic will affect your ability to drive, we do not recommend you driving home.

WHAT TO DO AFTER SURGERY

The outcome of your surgery can be influenced by how you look after your hand.

Pain management

- Keeping your hand elevated (above your heart level) is one of the most effective ways to control pain. It also reduces swelling, making finger and hand movements easier.
- You may have local anaesthetic injected into the wound. This will provide pain relief for several hours
- You may have a regional anaesthetic, which numbs your hand and arm and will also affect the muscles for 24 hours and sometimes longer. Start taking painkillers as soon as you feel the effect of the anaesthetics starting to wear off, before it becomes too painful. Take the tablets regularly for the first 2-3 days.

Dressings

- Keep your dressings clean and dry and leave intact until your next appointment with your surgeon.
- Cover with a plastic bag when you have a shower.
- Do not remove any plasters or splints as these are necessary to protect the wound.
- Do not plan to drive at least until your post-operative visit.

Your Post-Operative visit

- Your surgeon will give you an appointment for review at the time of your discharge. Call your surgeon's office for any changes in appointment.
- Bring your X-rays and other radiological investigations that may be needed to explain your surgery.
- You may need to see a hand therapist to help with recovery at this post-operative visit.
- Schedule enough time for your post-operative consultation and possible hand therapy.

POSTOPERATIVE PROBLEMS

Contact your surgeon's office if you have concerns about:

Pain

If your pain is excessive or deteriorating and not improving with elevation and analgesics.

Bleeding

If there is excessive bleeding through the dressing that is not stopped by elevation.

Swelling

Some swelling after hand surgery is inevitable. If the bandage or plaster feels tight and this is not reduced by elevation then call your doctor.

Colour

Bruising of the hand and arm is also inevitable following surgery. If the fingers however appear blue or very cold then call your doctor.

Infection

If there is excessive pain, redness or an odour from the dressing or if you feel particularly unwell or have a fever.

Medication

Some pain killers can make you feel nauseated. A different analgesic may be required.

Contact your Surgeon on their phone number below. Please note after hours this number will direct you to urgent contact details for your Surgeon:

Anthony Berger 03 9412 8840

David McCombe 03 9412 8820

Stephen Tham 03 9412 8860

James Thomas 03 9412 8870

Timothy Bennett 03 9412 8850

Peter Maloney 03 9412 8880

Will Alexander 03 9412 8890

If you are unable to contact your Surgeon, you should contact your local doctor or nearest Emergency Department

or

St Vincent's Hospital Emergency Department:

Enquiries Desk

Tel: (03) 9231 2211

Emergency Medical Advice

Tel: 1300 60 60 24 (Nurse-On-Call)