

Recovering from a burn injury to the hand

Your Care



Victorian Adult Burns Service
Service AT THE ALFRED

The information included in this handout will help you to manage your own recovery after a burn injury to the hand



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Dressings

The burn to your hand may heal with wound care and dressings alone. Your nurse will teach you which dressings to use and how to care for your injury. Be sure to keep your dressings clean and dry to avoid infection.

Swelling

Swelling is common after burn injury but prolonged swelling may delay healing. Techniques to reduce swelling include:

Elevation: Raise your hand above chest height when you are seated or lying down. Rest your hand on a raised surface (such as two pillows) to reduce swelling.

Compression: Compression (elastic) bandages are used to apply pressure to a specific injury to reduce swelling. If you are wearing a compression bandage and you experience pain, tingling or numbness, remove the bandage and contact your health care provider.

Movement: Gentle movement of the fingers and joints of your hand may help to reduce swelling and prevent joint stiffness. You should use your hand in light (easy) activities and complete regular exercises (see next page).

Sensation

A burn injury may impact the nerves in your skin and create changes to the way you feel pressure, touch or pain. You may have an increased sensitivity to hot or cold temperatures, feel pain/discomfort, tingling or numbness. In some cases, you may have an increased sensitivity to touch, known as hypersensitivity. Follow these strategies to desensitise your skin:

Massage: Once the burn is healed (when you no longer need dressings), gently rub cream into the affected area, gradually increasing pressure.

Vibration: Tap lightly over the area, building force as your tolerance increases.

Stroking: Stroke the area with smooth and rough items to teach your skin 'normal feeling'. Use items such as cotton balls, towels, fabrics, and Velcro.

Hot/cold sensitivity: Use a glove to protect your hand when completing activities that involve hot or cold temperatures (when showering or washing the dishes).

Activity

It is important to balance activity and rest while your burn is healing. Gentle activities such as brushing your teeth, eating or reading can be done with your burn affected hand straight away. Activities such as prolonged computer use and heavy manual activity is not recommended until the burn injury is healed.

Swimming: To prevent infection your wound must be fully healed before swimming. Sun protecton must be used at all times for newly healed skin.

Exercising: While you have open wounds avoid exercise other than short walks. Once your wound is healed you can gradually return to usual exercise.

Working: Your return will depend on the *type* of work you do and the *hours* involved. Please discuss your return to work with your health professional and employer. You may need to consider strategies such as alternative duties and increased rest breaks.


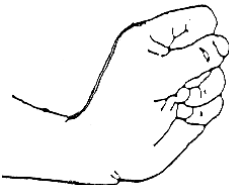

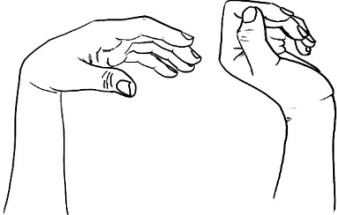
Driving: Wait for advice from your health professional before you return to driving. Do not drive if you are taking strong painkillers or before you have recovered the movement and strength in your hand so that you can safely control your vehicle.

Scarring

Generally, the sooner the wound heals the less risk there is for scarring to occur. Changes such as thickening or raising of the skin after your wound heals may indicate scarring. Your therapist can advise you on treatments if scarring occurs.

Exercises

These exercises will promote blood flow and promote healing, reduce swelling, and help prevent joint stiffness. You can complete the exercises when your wound is still covered with bandages. Do the exercises slowly throughout the day and to only mild or moderate discomfort.

<p>Finger Extension Make your fingers as straight as possible.</p>		<p>Finger Flexion Make a fist, being sure that each joint bends as much as possible.</p>	
<p>Finger "O" Touch the thumb to each fingertip, one at a time. Open fingers as much as you can after each touch.</p>		<p>Wrist Bends With your fingers relaxed, move your wrist forwards and backwards as far as you can</p>	

Please talk to your health professional if you have any questions or concerns.

Name and contact details: _____