

CMC joint arthroplasty (reconstruction of the joint) is a surgical procedure that occurs at the base of the thumb due to arthritis or a post-traumatic event. This procedure will excise or remove the aspect of the joint that is causing the pain or limitation of motion. An available tendon is utilized to provide a cushion to the joint, which will alleviate pain during functional use of your involved hand/s. Following the surgical procedure, the physician will place your hand in a bulky-post operative dressing that will immobilize your thumb and wrist. This dressing should remain on your hand until your post-operative visit with the physician. During this time it is advisable to exercise your fingers gently to prevent stiffness. You should not attempt to move your thumb. You should however, attempt to keep your hand and arm elevated above your heart to control edema (swelling). If numbness, severe pain and/or swelling becomes excessive make sure to contact the surgeon's office to alert him to your concern. **(713-520-1210)**

Your first follow-up visit will be 7 to 10 days after your surgery. The surgery scheduler should provide you with this appointment at the time they contact you about your surgery date. During this post-op visit with the doctor, the bulky dressing will be removed. The sutures are usually removed in a 14 day period depending on your biological healing. The physician will mostly likely refer you to a Hand therapist on that visit to have a removable thermoplastic splint custom fit to your hand. Upon this visit with the hand therapist, you may be instructed on further hand exercises as deemed necessary by your doctor. The therapist will instruct you on the wear and care of the orthotic device as well as provide adjustments if needed.

The hand therapist may have you begin gentle thumb exercises as well as provide you with techniques to address scar tissue formation by instructing you in scar massage and silicone products that will reduce the formation of immobile scar (hypertrophic scarring). Hypertrophic scarring is when the scar tissue becomes too aggressive and limits motion or develops well outside the aspect of the incision.

At 3 months, the physician usually will usually discharge the use of your thermoplastic thumb splint, with intermittent splint application as needed.

Following your thumb CMC joint arthroplasty, you can prepare for the following:

1. Immobilization of the involved thumb joint for approximately 6 weeks, you will be able to use the tip of your thumb for light functional activities of daily living.
2. Active range of motion exercises with a structured home exercise program.
3. Limited use of the involved thumb joint; avoiding resistive activities such as writing, opening jars, using scissors or cutting food with a knife. This will be significantly important if your dominant hand is the involved hand.
4. A hand therapist can provide you with information for compensatory skills or adaptive supplies to aid in improving your one-handed independence with daily activities.
5. Do not squeeze a resistive ball or putty until instructed to do so by your therapist or physician.
6. If hypersensitivity of the scar develops, you can easily manage this irritation by applying various textures or beginning gentle massage to the healing tissue. Your hand therapist can give you specific instructions on various techniques that have been successful in treatment of this condition.
7. If swelling remains a problem, the hand therapist can also assist you with management of your edema with various strategies such as retrograde massage and commercially available pressure wraps.
8. The development of rigid or immobile scar can also interfere with mobility, so you may receive prescribed Range of Motion exercises; scar massage and application of various commercially available silicone products that can assist with managing events such as these. Ask your physician or therapist.