



DR CHEN TU PROTOCOL THUMB CMC JOINT REPLACEMENT

Post-operative instructions



Protect the implant and wound while starting safe, early thumb and hand movement.

FIRST 7–14 DAYS PROTECT THE THUMB AND MOVE EARLY

- Keep the padded ‘boxing-glove’ bandage on, clean and dry until review—usually 7–14 days.
- Elevate the hand for the first 48 hours.
- Move fingers, thumb tip and wrist regularly.
- Gentle thumb movement within the bandage is encouraged as comfortable.
- Use the hand only for very light tasks.

Every 1–2 hours while awake:
5–10 gentle reps

Move—do not load
Do not force

IMPORTANT

- × No forceful pinch or grip
 - × No lifting over about 1 kg
 - × No pressure through the thumb
- Keep bandage and dressing dry



Open fingers

Gentle fist

Move thumb gently

TO 4 WEEKS THERAPY, SPLINT AND ACTIVE MOTION

- At the 7–14 day review, the bandage is removed and wound checked.
- Prolene is removed when ready—usually 10–14 days—and therapy begins.
- Your therapist fits a removable soft or hard thumb splint.
- Begin full gentle active thumb motion; remove the splint for exercises and hygiene as advised.



Thumb splint

Thumb away

Touch fingertip

The splint protects the implant—it is not complete immobilisation. No passive stretching, forceful key pinch or strengthening yet.

4+ WEEKS WEAN SPLINT AND BUILD FUNCTION

- At 4 weeks, stop/wean the splint if the wound is healed and the thumb comfortable.
- Keep it for risky or heavier activities until 6 weeks if needed.
- Weeks 4–6: buttons, cutlery, a light mug and gentle therapist-guided grip/pinch.
- Weeks 6–8: progress keys, jars, secateurs and heavier grip.
- Build load gradually—pain is your guide.



Coin pinch

Light mug grasp

Key pinch later

Swelling, stiffness and scar sensitivity are common early. Strength and endurance continue improving for several months.

TYPICAL MILESTONES

1

FIRST 7–14 DAYS

- Bandage clean and dry.
- Move fingers, thumb tip and wrist.
- Gentle thumb motion; no pinch or loading.

2

10–14 DAYS

- Wound reviewed; Prolene removed.
- Therapy and a soft or hard splint.
- Full gentle active thumb motion.
- Light, low-load tasks only.

3

AROUND 4 WEEKS

- Splint off or wean.
- Drive when out of the splint and able to control the wheel safely.
- Buttons, cutlery and a light mug as comfortable.

4

6–8 WEEKS

- Stronger key/power pinch: keys, jars and secateurs.
- Heavier grip/lifting, gym and manual work gradually.

KEY POINTS TO REMEMBER



Bandage dry to review



Move gently from day 1



Splint off at 4 weeks



Heavy tasks 6–8 weeks

CONTACT CLINIC / THERAPIST IF:

- bandage is wet / tight or the splint rubs
- redness, discharge or pain is increasing
- fingers become numb, cold, pale or blue
- thumb movement or function is not progressing