

Trapeziectomy

Day Surgery Unit



Patient information leaflet

This leaflet outlines the risks, general advice and information about hand surgery called trapeziectomy. If you have any questions or concerns, please discuss them with the doctor or nurse.

What is a trapeziectomy?

A trapeziectomy is the removal of the trapezium, which is a small bone in your wrist at the base of your thumb and this bone can be commonly affected by arthritis. Movements such as opening a lid or a jar, turning a key in a door or brushing/combing hair may be painful. The thumb base may be swollen, misshapen and feel or sound 'crunchy' on certain movements.

What are the alternatives to surgery?

Options for treatment to control the pain include using a protective support or brace for work and household tasks, physiotherapy and a cortisone injection into the joint. However, for some people the pain persists and an operation is required.

What does surgery involve?

Your arm may be numbed using a regional anaesthetic or a general anaesthetic may be used. A cut is made in the back of the hand at the base of the thumb. The trapezium bone is removed. The missing bone may be replaced by a folded piece of tendon to form a cushion between the neighbouring bones and this is secured in place with dissolvable stitches. Your surgeon will then close your skin with stitches.

After surgery

Will it hurt?

A local anaesthetic will be injected around the operation site during your surgery. This will keep the hand and fingers numb for a few hours following your procedure. Once the local anaesthetic has worn off, your hand will feel sore and inflamed for a few days. Taking regular pain killers as prescribed will help to keep your hand comfortable.

Elevation

To help reduce any swelling, it is important to keep your hand elevated (raised) above your heart using the sling provided or pillow. Gentle movement of your fingers will prevent them from becoming stiff. When sitting down or lying in bed, rest your hand on pillows or cushions. You are not required to wear a sling in bed.

Wound care and stitches

You will have either a bandage or plaster cast on your hand after the surgery. It is important that you keep these dressings clean and dry until you are seen at your outpatient appointment. You will also be seen by a hand therapist. The date and time of these appointments will be sent to you.

After three weeks, any removable stitches will be removed and you may be given a lighter splint to protect your thumb but allow you to begin to use your hand. This should be worn at all times initially and only removed for hand washing and the exercises you have been shown by the hand therapist. Exercises should be done slowly and should not cause too much discomfort. The hand therapist will advise you when you can start using your hand without the splint. It may be several weeks before you regain full movement in your hand.

Once your surgical wound is healed, it is safe to get your hand wet. Be sure to dry your hand well before reapplying any bandage or splint. You may need to wear your splint for up to six weeks.

Driving

You will not be able to drive so please arrange for someone to take you home after your surgery. Do not drive until your hand is comfortable and you have regained full finger movement. Discuss resuming driving and any return to work with your surgeon. Recovery to full function may take six months or longer.

What are the risks and complications?

Most people make a good recovery from a trapeziectomy. But as with any surgical procedure, there could be complications including:

- Pain
- Bleeding
- Infection
- Scarring
- Numbness or pain caused by nerve damage
- Continued pain or weakness.

If you have any concerns, please ask to speak to the doctor.

Reference sources

- <https://www.nuffieldhealth.com/treatments/trapeziectomy>
- <http://www.uhs.nhs.uk/Media/Controlleddocuments/Patientinformation/Medicinestherapiesandanaesthetics/Trapeziectomypatientinformation.PDF>
- <http://www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk/patient-information-leaflets/trapeziumectomy>

Contact details

If you require further advice, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Day Surgery Unit

Telephone: 01483 406783 (Monday–Friday, 8am–6pm)

Surgical Short Stay Unit

Telephone: 01483 406828

Out of hours advice

Telephone: Call 111 (formerly NHS Direct)

Website: www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk

PALS and Advocacy contact details

Contact details of independent advocacy services can be provided by our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) who are located on the right hand side as you enter the main reception area. PALS are also your first point of contact for health related issues, questions or concerns surrounding RSCH patient services.

Telephone: 01483 402757

Email: rsc-tr.pals@nhs.net

Opening hours: 9.00am–3.00pm, Monday to Friday

If you would like information documents in large print, on tape or in another language or form please contact PALS.

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