

# GRIP

Hand, Wrist &  
Reconstructive  
Surgery

## Trapeziectomy and Suspensionplasty

### Base of Thumb Osteoarthritis

The mobile joint at the base of the thumb (the CMC joint) is prone to wear and tear (osteoarthritis). This will cause pain at the base of the thumb, particularly when gripping or squeezing. Base of thumb osteoarthritis is very common.

Evidence in the international hand surgery literature concludes that removal of the trapezium bone is the treatment of choice for advanced cases. Various methods are used to support the thumb after removal of the trapezium bone. These include use of a suture implant or a strip of a tendon of the forearm.

### Your operation

Your base of thumb osteoarthritis will be treated by removal of the trapezium bone (trapeziectomy) and stabilisation of the thumb with a suture button implant (suspensionplasty).

An incision over the base of the thumb and a small incision on the back of the hand are required. Sutures will be used to close the skin. A tape bandage (Hypafix) is used to cover the wounds under a plaster splint or supportive hand and wrist dressing.

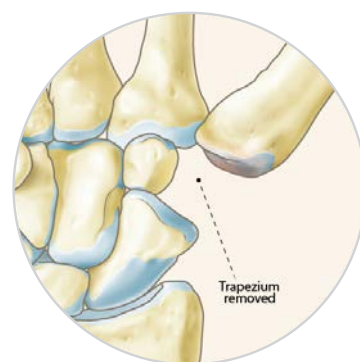
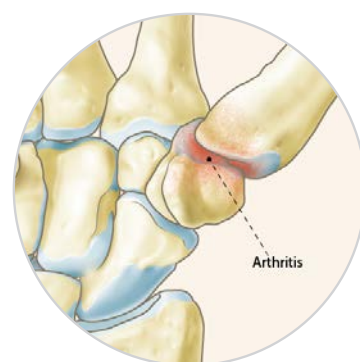
The operation usually takes place as a day surgery procedure, using general anaesthesia and a local anaesthetic for postoperative pain relief. The operation usually takes about 45 to 60 minutes.

### After the operation

**Day of surgery:** some or all your fingers may feel numb or tingly for 6-36 hours due to the local anaesthetic. You can start to move your fingers and the tip of your thumb before you leave the hospital.

**Day 1-5 after surgery:** keep the dressing clean and dry. You will see the hand therapist to replace the plaster or dressings with a plastic, removable splint custom made to your hand.

**Day 5-14 after surgery:** if your hand feels comfortable, the splint can be removed for gentle exercises and hand hygiene, but should be worn at all other times. The tape bandage can get wet when you clean your hand gently. You can use your hand lightly wearing your splint, but avoid heavy duties.



**Two weeks after surgery:** your progress will be reviewed by the doctor or practice nurse. If needed, a new tape bandage will be placed for another 3-5 days. You can start to remove the splint more regularly to do hand / thumb exercises as instructed by the doctor and hand therapist.

**Four to six weeks after surgery:** you can use the splint less as tolerated or stop splinting completely. Follow up appointments will continue to take place to monitor your progress.

## Recovery

In most cases, the wounds heal in 2 weeks and splinting can be stopped after 4-6 weeks. Graded return to normal use can start at this time. In some cases, however, the area around the base of the thumb remains tender or swollen for 2 or sometimes 6 months after surgery. Moisturising and gentle massage of this area is helpful. Strength can take up to 3 to 6 months after surgery to recover. Experienced hand therapists will assist you with your recovery.

## Potential complications

Surgery for base of thumb osteoarthritis is safe, routine and complications are uncommon. These complications can include: wound healing problems, infection, bleeding, bruising, stiffness, weakness, nerve injury or slower than expected recovery. Temporary or permanent changes in sensation of small patches of skin over the back of the thumb or back of the hand may occur. Another procedure may be required in the future.

## Driving after surgery

General advice on driving after surgery:

- » there is no legislation that covers surgery and driving
- » you must be able to safely control your car well, even in an emergency situation
- » some insurers will not cover any damage or liability if you had "recent surgery", if you were wearing a splint or cast whilst driving, or were using (pain) medication that could affect your ability to drive
- » it is advisable to contact your insurer before you are planning to drive again after your surgery
- » check with your surgeon if driving may affect the outcome of your rehabilitation.



### CONTACT

If you have any questions or have concerns after your surgery, please contact our rooms during office hours on **08 7127 0365**.

After hours, please contact Dr. Paul van Minnen by phone call or text message:

[Redacted contact information]

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