

Flexor Tendon Injuries of the Hand



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
WEXNER MEDICAL CENTER

The flexor muscles start at the elbow and extend into the lower arm. These muscles become the flexor tendons in the palm side of the hand and fingers. There are pulleys and tendons in your hand that bend your fingers. The tendons are like ropes that connect the muscles from your arm to your bones in your fingers and thumb. The pulleys are rings that make a tunnel for the tendon to glide through, and they hold the tendons close to the bone.

Cuts to the fingers, hand, or the under side of the wrist can injure these tendons, and the nerves and blood vessels around them.

Signs of injury

Tendon injuries may cause pain or catching when the fingers are moved. If the tendon is cut through, the finger will not bend on its own.

Treatment

Surgery is needed to bring the ends of the tendons together, so they can heal back together. Based on your injury, your doctor may also need to repair nerves and blood vessels during the tendon repair surgery.

Healing and recovery

You may need to limit movement of your fingers or hand after surgery to prevent the tendon from pulling apart. A splint may be worn to limit movement. Hand therapy may be started within a week after surgery. Follow the directions of your doctor and therapist to allow healing and to protect the tendon repair. Therapy will help you regain grip strength and motion in your finger or fingers. Healing can take 3 months after surgery.

Often full motion will not return to the injured tendon after surgery. If the finger is hard to bend, it may mean that the tendon pulled apart or scarring is limiting movement. Scarring is a part of healing, but it can limit movement of the tendon muscle through the pulley. Therapy may help loosen scar tissue or more surgery may be needed to release the scar tissue from around the tendon.

