

# Surgery to Reattach a Finger, Hand, or Arm



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If you had a finger, hand or arm cut off, surgery may be done to reattach it. This surgery is also called **replantation**. Your doctor will talk to you about whether the body part is able to be reattached based on:

- The amount of damage done to the body part
- The function you may gain by putting the part back on

Children often do better with this surgery because they heal and regrow tissue better than adults.

If surgery is an option, there will be months or years of rehabilitation after you leave the hospital. Even with successful surgery and rehabilitation, you will not have the same level of use as before the injury.

## What to expect

- Surgery for this type of injury is often done within hours of the injury to improve results.
- The surgeon will first clean away any damaged tissue. The ends of the bone may be shortened, so there is less pull on the blood vessels when they are connected. The part is put in place and the bone ends are held together with wires or a plate and screws.
- The tendons and muscles, and then the nerves and blood vessels are repaired.
- The wound is closed and a large bandage is put on to protect the site.
- After surgery, you will be checked often to be sure there is good blood flow to the body part that was reattached.

- The arm will be elevated to improve blood flow to the hand and fingers.
- Before leaving the hospital, a cast or splint may be put on to protect the part.

## Your rehabilitation

You will need to work closely with your care team and follow instructions from your doctor and therapist. Follow these and other instructions given to you:

- Keep your hand elevated above the level of your heart as directed to improve blood flow to the part.
- Avoid tobacco use or being around people who are smoking. Tobacco use decreases blood flow to the reattached part.
- Do exercises to keep the joints and muscles working. Follow your therapist's instructions.
- Massage the scar after the wound has healed to limit scar tissue from forming. Your doctor or therapist will teach you.
- Talk about your feelings about how your reattached part looks and works with your doctor.

Use of the part will depend on the nerves growing back. There are the sensory nerves that allow you to feel and motor nerves that signal your muscles to move. Nerves grow back at a rate of 1 inch each month. The number of inches from your fingertip to the injury is a good estimate of how many months it will be until you can feel something with the end of your finger.

In some cases over time, other surgery may be needed to improve motion in joints or tendons.