



South Eastern Hand Therapy

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Suspensionplasty for arthritis at base of thumb.



ARTHRITIS AT BASE OF THUMB

Degenerative arthritis (osteoarthritis) of the thumb carpo-metacarpal joint (CMC) is a common problem, which mainly affects women around the fifth decade of life. It is also seen in men and women who have performed heavy jobs using the thumbs. Arthritis is a condition where the articular cartilage or gliding surface of a joint becomes worn and degraded. This may result in a painful and stiff joint.

SURGICAL INTERVENTION

When conservative treatment, such as use of a thumb splint and activity modification, is no longer enough to control pain, then surgical intervention can be an option. There are many surgical options for pain relief in this area of the hand and your surgeon will discuss with you the most effective in your case.

SUSPENSIONPLASTY

A common surgical intervention is a joint reconstruction called Suspensionplasty. The aim of this surgery is to remove the arthritic bone whilst maintaining stability and function in the hand.

The first surgical step is to remove the trapezium bone as shown below



Next your surgeon will work to stabilize the hand by fixing the adjacent bones together using a tendon graft.



Finally the surgeon will create a cushion to place in the gap where the trapezium bone was removed. This is also achieved using a tendon graft.

RECOVERY

Recovery from this surgery is often slow and pain and discomfort is normal.

Recovery times vary and can take between 3-6 months.

Immediately post-operatively, you will be immobilized in a cast. The cast is usually removed two weeks following surgery and replaced with a removable splint. Your Surgeon and Therapist will advise you when you can remove the splint and begin moving the hand again.

Given the complexity of this joint reconstruction you will require ongoing therapy to avoid complications. Your Therapist and Surgeon will decide the frequency and intensity of your therapy regime jointly.

If you have any questions or problems, please phone your therapist on 8560 0293

