



**ARTHROPLASTIES**  
**THUMB CMC SOFT TISSUE RECONSTRUCTION**

**Dr. Berschback**

**POSTOPERATIVE REHABILITATION**

The course of postoperative rehabilitation must be carefully managed. Establishing the optimal therapy program must consider the following:

Extent of the disease	Extent of the surgical procedure
Joint stability postop	Complications

**10 – 14 Days Postop**

The bulky compressive dressing is removed. Following suture removal, the patient is fitted with a wrist and thumb static splint with the IP joint free. The thumb is positioned midway between palmar and radial abduction (pop can position). A light compressive dressing is applied to the hand and forearm prior to fabricating the splint. Note: The thumb must *not* be positioned in radial abduction. This would risk stretching out the reconstruction.

**2 Weeks Postop**

AROM of IP and stabilization of MCP (HEP)

Scar management is initiated. It is critical to emphasize scar mobilization as dense adhesions are common. Scar massage, scar retraction using a piece of dycem, and use of a scar remodeling product such as Rolyan 50/50™, OtoformK™, or Elastomer™ are recommended.

Manual desensitization techniques should be initiated as the area is often hypersensitive along the surgical site.

**4 Weeks Postop**

Active ROM MCP is added.

**6 Weeks Postop**

Active and self passive ROM exercises are initiated to the thumb and wrist 6 – 8 times a day for 10 minute sessions.

Exercises should emphasize:

palmar & radial abduction	thumb circumduction, flexion, extension
wrist flexion, extension	wrist radial, ulnar deviation

The CMC joint should be supported during self passive exercises.

## **THUMB CMC SOFT TISSUE RECONSTRUCTION (continued)**

### **6 Weeks Postop (continued)**

Unrestricted PROM exercises may be initiated. Continue to support the CMC joint.

Wean from wearing wrist and thumb static splint to an as needed basis.

Persistent and dense scars may benefit from ultrasound. The ultrasound can enhance the vasoelasticity of the soft tissues, thus increasing mobility.

Gentle strengthening may be initiated between 6 and 8 weeks postop. If edema and/or pain are persisting, delay strengthening until 8 weeks.

### **8 Weeks Postop**

The wrist and thumb static may be discontinued. Patients who require use of their hand in repetitious, heavy lifting or pinching activities may be more comfortable in a short opponens splint. The splint will provide external support. Depending on the level of need, either a thermoplastic or neoprene splint can be used.

Persistent hypersensitivity along the surgical site typically responds well to high rate, conventional TENS worn continuously until the pain dissipates. Fluidotherapy can be beneficial in reducing the hypersensitivity, as well.

### **10 – 12 Weeks Postop**

The patient may resume normal use of their hand in daily activity. Patient education is important. The basic guidelines outlined in conservative management of CMC arthritis should be reviewed once again. Simple suggestions such as using non-skid pads to remove jar lids, etc. should be reinforced.

### **CONSIDERATIONS**

The patient should be encouraged to practice functional activities and prehension of small, lightweight objects to regain dexterity and minimize frustration. To begin this when the patient begins AROM exercises is encouraged.

Patients will typically indicate their thumb and hand have restored functional use within 6 months to 1 year.

Please call Northwoods Therapy Associates with questions: Altoona (715) 839-9266 Chippewa Falls (715) 723-5060

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