



Thumb Carpometacarpal (CMC) Arthroplasty  
Dr. Bakker's Post-op Protocol

**Important Instructions Following Surgery:**

- After surgery, your forearm and hand will be in a large bandage and plaster splint. Please DO NOT remove this. Try to keep your bandage clean and dry.
- To minimize swelling, you must keep your hand lifted up to your shoulder level.
- When sitting or lying, you should use pillows to support your surgically affected extremity, especially when sleeping.
- Encouragement for finger movement to avoid stiffness and to help with swelling reduction. A pulling sensation may be noted, but this is normal.

**Referral to Hand Therapy:**

- You will be instructed to make an appointment with hand therapy (OT) 4 weeks out from your surgery. Depending on the clinic where hand therapy will be performed, please contact our Edina office at 952-456-7000 or our Plymouth office at 763-520-7870, to schedule.
- The goals for hand therapy following a CMC arthroplasty are to regain thumb / wrist range of motion, decrease pain, increase functional strength and return to functional activities.
- You will be seen in hand therapy 1-2 times each week.

**-Surgery-Week 2:**

- Remain in the post-operative thumb spica splint - you are free to move your elbow.
- Perform gentle range of motion of the fingers.
- Ice 20-30 minutes three times daily.
- Transition to Tylenol.
- Take 1500 mg of Vitamin C daily.

**-Weeks 2-4:**

- Return to clinic at the end of week 2 post-operatively for suture removal and cast application.
- The type of cast that will be applied is called a thumb spica, which includes the thumb and forearm, but allows for movement of the fingers and elbow.
- Your cast will be worn for an additional 2 weeks (total 4 weeks immobilization).
- Activities may be performed while wearing the cast as tolerated, with the exception of lifting no more than 1 pound with the surgically affected hand.

- Discontinuation of narcotics is expected, continue with Tylenol and ibuprofen as needed.
- Take 1500 mg of Vitamin C daily.

#### **-Week 4:**

- Return to the clinic when you are 4 weeks out from surgery for cast removal, repeat imaging, and re-evaluation.
- You will be provided with a removable thumb spica splint to be worn with activities, either in off-the-shelf or a custom splint fabricated in hand therapy.
- Hand Therapy will initiate active thumb and wrist motion exercises. A home program will be designed for you.
- A custom splint may be fabricated for you in Hand Therapy.
- The goal of rehabilitation is to: 1) be able to oppose your thumb to all your finger tips  
2) move your thumb away from your index finger 3) regain functional strength.
- Do not over-stretch your repair. Do not over-exercise with a ball or TheraPutty.
- REMEMBER...the outcome of the surgery is stabilization and padding at the base of your thumb metacarpal.

#### **-Weeks 4-12:**

- Continue with OT with the goals of increasing ROM, scar tissue management, and decreasing pain/inflammation.
- The custom splint will continue to be worn with vigorous hand activities until 12 weeks from the date of surgery.
- Your therapist will alter and adjust your exercise program as you progress.
- Refrain from forceful power grasp activities.

#### **-Weeks 12 and beyond:**

- Return to the clinic at 12 weeks post-operatively for re-evaluation and repeat imaging or as needed if there are no concerns.
- OT will likely be discontinued prior to this time.
- Return to activities as tolerated without further restrictions.