

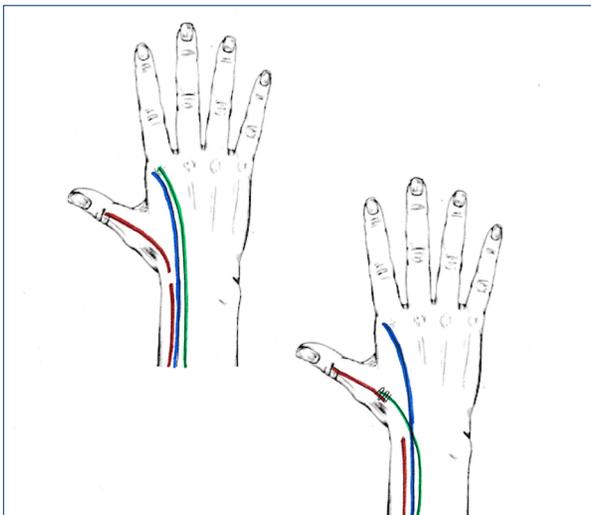
Tendon Transfer

“Working with a knowledgeable hand therapist can make the difference between success and failure in complex hand surgical cases. The therapist extends the continuum of our care, as well as functioning as coach and trainer for our patients.”

Marybeth Ezaki, MD, Past President, American Society for Surgery of the Hand

What is a tendon transfer?

A tendon transfer is a surgery that is done to help regain function of the hand after nerve or tendon injury. In this surgery, one end of a working tendon is moved to a different location to help a damaged or non-working tendon and muscle. The surgeon will explain how the tendon will be moved and what the goals are after surgery.



Example of a tendon transfer: A spare finger tendon from the index finger (green line) is cut and moved to the injured thumb tendon (red line) to help it straighten the thumb tip

What can a hand therapist do for me?

Hand therapy before surgery may be recommended to strengthen and stretch the hand in preparation for surgery. It is important for the joints and skin to be flexible. The working tendon and its muscle, which will be moved, need to be strong. After hand surgery, the tendon transfer will need protection

while healing occurs. The hand therapist will make a custom orthosis that will protect the healing tendon. The hand will be placed in a safe position that avoids stress on the repair.

The hand therapist will provide instruction on how to reduce any swelling and scar tightness and how to move the hand safely during healing. The hand therapist can demonstrate how to perform everyday activities while protecting the tendon transfer. As the healing progresses, therapy will focus on relearning to move and strengthening the new tendon-muscle connection.

What to expect following surgery and therapy?

The purpose of the surgery is to restore lost movement. The healing process can take up to one year to gain maximum results. The new tendon is not as strong as the original, but it can restore motion and function to allow patients to return to daily activities.



Example of a custom orthosis that can be fabricated to protect the tendon transfer until healed