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2026

# After Hand Surgery: Open Reduction Internal Fixation (ORIF)
# Halifax Infirmary, QE II

## What happened during my surgery?

- You had a surgery called **open reduction internal fixation (ORIF)** to fix a broken bone in your hand.
- Your surgeon used plates, screws, or wires to hold the bone in place.
- After your surgery, you will have a splint or a cast.

## Can I move my hand?

- No. **Do not** move your operated hand unless your surgeon says it is OK. You may only move your fingers that were not operated on.
- **If you use your operated hand too much, the plates, screws, or wires can move and affect how your hand heals**.
- At your follow-up appointment, your surgeon may give you different instructions about moving your hand.

## How do I care for my splint or cast?

- Wear your splint or cast **at all times**. **Do not** remove it unless told by your surgeon.
- Keep your splint or cast and your hand dry.
  - To bathe or shower, use a plastic bag or plastic wrap to cover your arm up to your elbow.
  - **Do not** soak your hand until your surgeon says it is OK.
- If your splint or cast is soft or loose, call the Plastic Surgery Clinic:
  - Phone: 902-473-7518

## Pain and swelling

- It is normal to have pain and swelling after surgery.
- If your surgeon has given you a prescription for pain medication, take it as directed.
- You may also take acetaminophen (Tylenol®) or ibuprofen (Advil ®). Follow the package instructions.
  - **Do not** take acetaminophen and ibuprofen at the same time.
  - **Do not** drink alcohol while taking pain medication.
- **Keep your hand raised above your heart for 3 days**. This may help to lower swelling.

## Caring for your stitches and dressing

- ☐ Keep your dressing on until your follow-up appointment.
- ☐ Your stitches should be removed after _____ days:
  - ☐ At your follow-up appointment with your surgeon
  - ☐ At an appointment with your primary health care provider (family doctor or nurse practitioner) or at a walk-in clinic.
    **Keep all follow-up appointments**.
- ☐ You have Steri-Strips™. These should fall off on their own in 7 to 10 days.
  - › If your Steri-Strips™ get caught on your clothes, you may cover them with a bandage or a dressing

## If you have bleeding:

- Raise your hand above your heart and put firm pressure on the area for 10 to 15 minutes.
- **If the bleeding does not stop, call your surgeon or primary health care provider**. **If you cannot reach them, go to the nearest Emergency Department right away**. **Do not** drive yourself.

**Call your primary health care provider or surgeon if:**

- › You have more pain, redness, swelling, or drainage
- › You have numbness or tingling
- › Your fingers change colour (like white, blue, or purple)
- › You have a fever (temperature above 38 °C or 100.4 °F) or chills

**If you cannot reach your primary health care provider or surgeon, go to the nearest Emergency Department right away**.

## Can I drive?

- ☐ Yes. **If you are not taking opioids**, you may drive 24 hours after surgery.
- ☐ No. **Do not drive until your surgeon says it is safe**.

## Follow-up appointment

Plastic Surgery Clinic, Halifax Infirmary

- › Phone: 902-473-7518

Date: _____ Time: _____

*Prepared by:* Plastic Surgery Clinic, HI, QE II
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