Surgery and Recovery

- All surgeries are done in the operating room under general anesthesia and after your surgery you will spend the night in the hospital.

- After your surgery you will wear a post-operative splint for 2 weeks and then be placed in a cast for approximately 2 more weeks to protect the tendon transfer while it heals.

- Your arm will be splinted and then casted from your elbow down to your hand and you will need assistance with transfers and other self-care that you may normally perform yourself. You will NOT be able to bear any weight on this extremity. This is different from nerve transfer surgery!

- For 3 months after the surgery you will have limited use of your arm with many restrictions in place including no heavy duty use of that arm.

- It is important to be immobilized as movement too early can lead to a rupture of the tendon transfer.

- After the immobilization period it will be essential to work with a therapist in order to retrain and strengthen muscles.

- Therapy will begin at approximately 4 weeks after your surgery however there will still be many restrictions in place and you will need assistance with transfers and other self-care activities for up to 3 months after surgery.

660 S. Euclid
Campus Box 8238
Saint Louis, Missouri 63110
314-362-7388
1-800-238-5848
Fax: 314-367-0225
www.plasticsurgery.wustl.edu
http://wuphysicians.org
WHAT IS A TENDON?
- A tendon is a strong cord that connects muscles to bones and transmits muscle action into movement of the joints where they cross.
- Each muscle has a starting point (origin) and tapers down from the muscle belly into a tendon that attaches onto the bone (insertion). When a muscle contracts or fires it causes a specific action.

WHAT IS TENDON TRANSFER SURGERY?
- Tendon transfer surgery is a type of surgery that can improve lost hand function.
- A functioning tendon that is “extra” is shifted from its insertion site to a new attachment to restore function.
- This new attachment site belongs to a muscle that is no longer working and once transferred this “extra” tendon can restore function to the muscle that was previously not functioning.

WHY HAVE TENDON TRANSFER SURGERY?
- Tendon transfer surgery can help restore critical functions of the upper extremity and can lead to an increase in independence and self-care.
- Some functions that may be able to be restored through tendon transfer surgery include:
  1. The ability to bend and straighten the wrist.
  2. Improve grip and hand function by restoring finger and thumb motion.

Other Procedures
You may be a candidate for other procedures such as nerve transfers, joint fusion, or anti-claw procedures, etc. Talk to your doctor about these other options.

PRIOR TO SURGERY...
- Identify which muscles work, measure how well they work to determine if they can be used in the transfer. A test called an EMG or nerve conduction study may be required to help obtain this information.
- Your doctor will assess your joints to ensure they are supple and not stiff.
- It will be important to undergo an assessment with the therapists at Milliken Hand Therapy to assess your current functions and see what functions could be gained by surgery.
- Match available muscles with functional requirements.
- Verify that a strong support system is in place to help with the rehabilitation process.
- Determine what surgeries need to be performed, when, and in what order.

APPOINTMENTS
314-362-7388
1-800-238-5848
www.plasticsurgery.wustl.edu
http://wuphysicians.org