After Surgery Instructions

**Trigger Finger or Trigger Thumb**

1st Week

For the first several days it is important to keep the operated hand elevated, trying to keep it between the ceiling and your heart. At night, the hand can be placed on pillows on your chest, on pillows out to the side, or in front of you as you lie on your other side.

**Motion of the fingers and thumb is important.** The digits should be straightened completely, and then bent as much as the dressing allows. This should be done slowly and gently. Fast, forceful or repetitious motion is **not** encouraged. A suggested pattern is 50 times an hour during normal waking hours. This does not take long, and the exercises should not be done constantly.

Keep the dressing clean and dry. It will be changed when you return to the office. Use a plastic bag over it if taking a shower.

The local numbing medicine used during or after the surgery usually lasts 7 to 8 hours after surgery. It will occasionally last much longer, up to three days in some patients. This is a normal phenomena, and not worrisome. Pain pills should be taken if needed, but many patients do not require any after this surgery, and you may be able to get by with non-prescription painkillers such as Advil or Tylenol.

You can apply ice over the operated area to help reduce discomfort, as long as the dressing stays dry.

Light activity with the operated hand is encouraged, especially after the first several days. Light lifting, typing, and daily activities can be done with moderation.

If you have problems or questions after this surgery, please call the Cedar Valley Hand Surgery office, **319-364-2697**. Whenever possible, please call during normal office hours.
2nd Week

The dressing or band aid covering the incision and sutures can be changed as often as needed. If at home in a clean environment, the incision can be left open to the air. Otherwise, it should remain covered, unless showering. It is acceptable for soap and water to run over the incision in the shower. The sutures should not be placed under water, as in a bath, dishwasher, or swimming. The incision can be cleaned with alcohol or peroxide if needed.

Finger motion exercises should be continued. Once again, it is the distance that the fingers travel that is important, not how fast they move. Active exercises using your own muscle power should be done to straighten and bend the fingers as far as possible. Stretching exercises, using your other hand to gently bend and straighten the operated finger or thumb should also be done.

Repetitious or forceful activity needs to be avoided. Use of the hand is encouraged, but not for forceful gripping or heavy tool use.

3rd Week

No band aid or dressing is needed 2 to 3 days after the sutures have been removed. Three days after the sutures are out, soaking is permitted (dishwashing, baths, or swimming).

Lotion massage into the scar should be started three days after the sutures have been removed. This should be done for 3 to 5 minutes twice daily, using any type of standard hand lotion. This will help soften the scar, resolve swelling, and retrain nerve endings. Lotion massage should be continued for several months after surgery in this fashion, or until the scar no longer looks red.

Motion exercises should also be continued until complete range of motion is reached. Activity can be progressively increased as long as swelling or pain do not worsen. Full, unrestricted activity is usually possible by 4 to 6 weeks after surgery.