

VENICE PLASTIC SURGERY

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Cosmetic, Reconstructive, Face, Breast, and Hand Surgery

Hand, tendon injuries

One of the most disabling injuries to the hand is the laceration of tendons and nerves. Tendons are the strings that connect the muscles of the forearm to the finger tips. There are no muscles in the finger to bend the finger tip. The movement is performed by a muscle in your forearm connected by a long string or tendon and a pulley system. The system is truly amazing to me and exceedingly complex. Hand specialists as myself are needed to repair these injuries.

How do they occur? The most common household injury happens when somebody uses a knife to jab, stab or pierce an object. Their hand slides down the blade when jabbing. They may also cut something as a bagel. They cut towards their hand instead of away from themselves. The knife slips and a small cut of the finger results. That is all it takes to cut these tendons and small nerves. I cringe every time I see people cutting towards their hand. Arteries and veins may also be injured. Infection could be a problem. There is no good news here.

The repair process requires a trip to the operating room. Frequently the small nerve in the finger is also cut as it runs right along the side of the tendon. For a clean, even laceration the repair is not usually difficult. It may not have to be fixed right away either. Sometimes the emergency room doctor puts a stitch on the cut then sends the patient to us a day or two later. We then arrange for the tendon and nerve repair in the operating room a day or two after that. It is usually an out patient procedure.

Next comes the rehabilitation. This is the hard part because you need to be in a cast or splint for a few months. Hand therapy is needed several times a week. This may be continued for many more months. The final result is never as good as new. There is always scar tissue that forms. Sometimes more surgery is needed. The repair may break down and have to be repeated. The nerve takes many months to get some feeling back. The sensation is usually far less than normal.

The injuries may not seem obvious so even the smallest hand injury needs a full evaluation. Consult your doctor in every case. Also any penetrating injury requires that your tetanus immunization be up to date. For those with health problems as diabetes we worry about infection. Infection may travel from the finger tip down the tendon into the hand or the forearm. Hospitalization will then be required.

I do not think that I can recommend the use of thick leather gloves while preparing dinner but the thought did occur. Imagine Emril L'Goste on TV cooking with a huge set of thick leather gloves. Now that would be a sight! Just use common sense. Always cut away from yourself. Go slow. An ounce of prevention is worth it every time.

The above represents the opinion of A. E. Haas, M.D.

Venice Plastic Surgery, Venice Wound Center, Lakeside Medical Center

Just call us directly. No referral needed unless required by your insurance company

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