

PHYSICAL THERAPY PROTOCOL

De Quervain's Release

Release of the first dorsal compartment (APL/EPB tendons)

The first dorsal compartment has been released to relieve tendon irritation at the thumb side of the wrist. Early gentle thumb and wrist motion prevents stiffness and tendon adhesion; strengthening follows once the incision has healed.

General Precautions

- Soft dressing or thumb-spica splint for comfort early.
- Avoid forceful thumb/wrist loading and repetitive pinching for ~4-6 weeks.
- Protect the incision; control swelling.

Phase I — Early Motion Weeks 0-2

Goals

- Control swelling
- Begin gentle motion

Precautions / Restrictions

- No resisted thumb/wrist activity
- Protect the incision

Exercises & Interventions

- Gentle active thumb and wrist range of motion
- Tendon gliding
- Edema control / elevation

Criteria to Advance

- Wound healing
- Comfortable gentle motion

Phase II — Motion & Scar Care Weeks 2-6

Goals

- Restore full motion
- Manage scar

Exercises & Interventions

- Full thumb and wrist AROM
- Gentle stretching (including radial/ulnar deviation)
- Scar mobilization and desensitization

Criteria to Advance

- Full pain-free motion
- Mobile scar

Phase III — Strengthening Weeks 6-12

Goals

- Restore grip, pinch, and thumb strength

Exercises & Interventions

- Progressive thumb, pinch, and grip strengthening
- Forearm strengthening
- Return to functional tasks

Criteria to Advance

- Strength improving toward symmetric
- Return to full activity

This protocol is a general guideline. Progression is criteria-based and may be advanced or slowed by Dr. O'Donnell based on intraoperative findings, tissue quality, fixation, and individual healing. Time frames are approximate. Direct questions to the office at (305) 393-8810.