

DeQuervain's Release Protocol

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Phase I (Post-op Weeks 0–2) Protection and Symptom Control Phase

- Soft bulky dressing or thumb spica splint for comfort as directed
- Encourage immediate gentle active range of motion of fingers and thumb
- Thumb range of motion within comfort, avoiding forceful gripping or pinching
- Wrist range of motion as tolerated
- Edema control with elevation and ice as needed
- Pain management emphasized
- Avoid repetitive thumb motion, forceful grasping, or lifting

Phase II (Weeks 2–6) Early Motion and Functional Use Phase

- Discontinue splint as directed; use removable thumb spica brace for comfort if needed
- Progress thumb and wrist range of motion to full as tolerated
- Initiate gentle stretching of the first dorsal compartment
- Begin light functional use of the hand for activities of daily living
- Scar management and desensitization as indicated
- Avoid repetitive pinching, gripping, or resisted thumb extension/abduction

Phase III (Weeks 6–10) Progressive Strengthening Phase

- Progress to full, pain-free thumb and wrist range of motion
- Initiate light strengthening of thumb extensors and abductors
- Begin grip and pinch strengthening as tolerated
- Advance functional hand use for daily activities
- Avoid forceful or repetitive activities that provoke pain

Phase IV (Weeks 10–16) Return to Activity Phase

- Advance strengthening and endurance of thumb and wrist musculature
- Gradual return to work, lifting, and recreational activities
- Introduce task-specific or sport-specific activities as appropriate
- Emphasize ergonomic modification and load management

Phase V (Weeks 16+) Full Return to Function

- Return to unrestricted activities as tolerated
- Continue home exercise program for flexibility and strength
- Progression based on pain-free motion, strength, endurance, and functional confidence