

## Checking the Blood Flow in Your Arm

Good **blood flow** is important for recovery after surgery on your arm. These instructions will teach you how to check the blood flow in your arm by examining your hand and performing a capillary refill test. Follow the instructions below.

### Examining Your Hand

#### Step 1

Look at your hand and fingers on the arm recovering from the surgical procedure.

- A** Compare your hands.  
Do you see any differences?



- B** Your hand and fingers on the surgical side should feel warm, be normal in color and have little to no swelling. These signs mean you have good blood flow in your arm.



- C** If your hand looks red or blue, feels cool, or has a lot of swelling, your arm may have poor blood flow.

#### Step 2

Does your hand feel numb or tingly? A feeling of numbness and tingling may also be a sign of poor blood flow.



- You may feel numbness from a type of anesthesia called a nerve block until it wears off.
- If you are not sure if you had a nerve block, ask your surgeon.

#### Step 3

Wiggle your fingers.

Wiggling your fingers may improve blood flow to your hand.

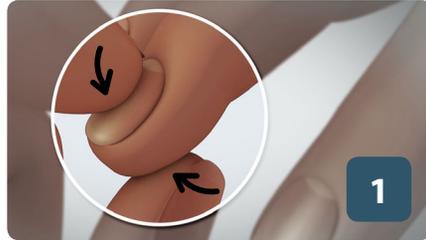


Repeat steps one through three every four hours or as directed by your surgeon.

## Capillary Refill Test

### Step 1

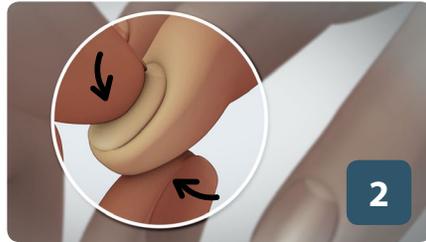
Gently pinch the tip of your finger directly over the fingernail with your hand.



### Step 2

Squeeze until your fingernail turns white, then let go.

Your fingernail should turn pink again within two to three seconds. This sign means you have good blood flow in your hand.



Repeat steps one and two every four hours or as directed by your surgeon.



### Contact your surgeon if you notice your:

- Hand looks red or blue
- Hand looks very swollen
- Hand feels cold, numb, or tingly (unless you had nerve block anesthesia)
- Fingernail does not turn pink again within two to three seconds

Watch online at: [gwinnettmedicalcenter.nucleuslibrary.com](http://gwinnettmedicalcenter.nucleuslibrary.com)

This handout is intended to supplement the information you receive from your healthcare provider. This information should never be considered personal medical advice. Always contact your healthcare provider with questions or concerns.