

PRACTICE FORUM: Soft Splinting Technique for Maintaining Thumb Abduction

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Problem: Patients with an edematous, immobilized hand can develop an adduction contracture of the first web space very quickly. However, this population may not tolerate the hardness of thermoplastics and, because of casts and other proximal immobilization such as external fixators, commonly applied splints may not be practical.

Solution: A simple foam splint can be fabricated as follows (see figure):

1. A piece of foam rubber (purchased in scrap from an upholstery supplier) is cut to a 2" × 1" × 6" size. Cutting is facilitated by using a hand-held jigsaw.

2. A 2 1/2 foot section of Surgitube (a tubular cotton stockinette approximately 3/4" wide) is tied in the center of the foam rubber with a firm knot.

3. Application of the splint is performed by folding the foam rubber on itself, inserting in the first web, and wrapping the Surgitube proximally around the wrist in a figure 8 and tying it with a bow. The foam rubber is constantly attempting to return to its flat configuration and provides a very gentle but con-

sistent extension and abduction force for the index finger and thumb.

Credit for this technique should be given to its originator; however, this idea was one discovered in Germany on a hospital tour several years ago and the exact originator is unknown.

