

HAND  
**DR LIM  
BENG HAI**

DRIVEN BY PASSION,  
SURGEON OFFERS PATIENTS  
HOPE WITH HIS ART  
AND SCIENCE.

As a teenager, Dr Lim Beng Hai had set his heart on becoming a pilot. But after his mother died when he was only 17, he had a dramatic change of heart. The teenager decided to help people instead and was determined to do so as a doctor.

The decision paid off. Today, Dr Lim is recognised by the Singapore Society for Hand Surgery as one of five founding surgeons in the speciality here. But that is secondary for the 57-year-old as his passion for his work is fired by the mixture of the art and science it entails.

"It allows me to do aesthetic work," says Dr Lim. "People usually come to me in a negative state because their hands have been damaged after an accident or are abnormal at birth."

**AN ESSENTIAL WORKHORSE**

The importance of the hand, says Dr Lim, is often understated, and its value in a person's everyday life usually only gains prominence in a trauma. "It never fails. Every time I see a patient, they admit that they never knew how important their hands were in their everyday life," he says.

"I see all kinds of patients, from those whose hands have been injured by a door and need to be reconstructed or repaired to others with congenital problems like an extra thumb. Some have fingers that are stuck together or have no fingers at all.


"This is where we do a bit of cosmetic work in addition to the functional. It's satisfying to be able to reconstruct a hand and make it functional."

Another group of patients Dr Lim sees is the elderly, who tend to suffer from degenerative problems. He says that as people age, ligaments start to tear, tendons swell and fingers lock because of arthritis.

**KEEPING ONE'S HANDS SAFE**

But there are preventive measures one can adopt to keep hands healthy and reduce the risk of injuries.

"I advise patients to keep stretching and strengthening their hands," he says. "Don't

overuse them. As our environments are air-conditioned, warm hands up in warm water and stretch them before working them. When hands are cold, the ligaments are tight. They're like a rubber band stored in a fridge. Try pulling it and it will snap." 

*For more information, visit Dr Lim Beng Hai, director and senior consultant hand surgeon, Centre For Hand & Reconstructive Microsurgery Clinic, Paragon Medical Suites, #09-08, 290 Orchard Road, Singapore 238859.*

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