



Advice and exercises for wrist fractures

You have fractured your wrist (a bone called the radius) this means that there is a break in the bone.

What should I expect?

- your wrist may be painful and swollen for a few weeks
- when the bones are in a satisfactory position your wrist will be supported in a cast for 4-6 weeks
- you may have to attend several clinic appointments to check the position of the bones
- if the bones are not in a satisfactory position, you may require an operation. This will be discussed with you if an operation is necessary
- these injuries usually heal well naturally.



How can I help myself?

- while in the cast, do not allow your hand to hang down for any length of time as it may become swollen and painful
- do not get the cast wet. When washing or bathing keep it out of the water. You may cover it in a plastic bag sealed with tape but do not put it under the water
- keep the joints not in the cast moving to stop them becoming stiff, by doing the following exercises 3 - 4 times a day:
 - 1 raise your arm above your head (if necessary help it with the other hand)
 - 2 touch the back of your neck with your hand
 - 3 touch the small of your back with your hand

- 4 straighten and bend your elbow
- 5 make a fist, as far as your cast allows, bending your fingers and thumb, then spread your fingers and thumb wide apart.

If there are any problems with your cast, please contact the Plaster Room:
Bassetlaw Hospital Tel: 01909 572046
Doncaster Royal Infirmary Tel: 01302 644608.

Answers to common questions

Most of these breaks heal in six weeks. It will take a few months to return to full normal activity especially if you have had a complex injury, or have a very active lifestyle.

You can drive when you have good control of the steering wheel and gear stick. You will need to check with your insurance company before you drive with your cast on.

When the cast is removed the following advice will be useful:

- bathe the joint in warm water (as long as all wounds are fully healed) for about 10 minutes
- dry the area and rub moisturiser in to soften hard and flaky skin. Firmly massage the cream into the tissue/scars to loosen the scar tissue and move any fluid in the area
- complete the exercises below, regularly throughout the day. It is normal to feel some discomfort during exercises but rest if there is a lot of pain and then try again later
- you may be provided with a splint or a firm bandage called tubigrip. This will help to support the joint and prevent swelling. This should be removed at night or if it feels too tight. Ensure there are no wrinkles in the bandage as this can leave marks in your skin.

To speed up your recovery, you should begin to do the following exercises to help you regain the movement in your wrist and hand. Each of the following exercises should be done 10 times regularly throughout the day. Bathing your hand and wrist in warm water for 10 minutes before exercising can help to improve the movements.



1a



1b



1 Make a fist then straighten your fingers.

2a



2b



2 Take your thumb over to the base of your little finger then stretch your thumb back out to the side.

3a



3b



3 Bend your wrist up then bend your wrist down.

4a



4b



4 Spread your fingers out then bring them back together.

5a



5b



5 Turn your hands over one way and then the other way.

If your elbow and shoulder are stiff, you should also do the following exercises:

6a



7



6 Bend your elbow then straighten your elbow.

6b



7 Lift both arms as high as possible then slowly lower your arms back down.



If you have been given a splint, you should remove it to do your exercises.

To improve your strength, wringing out cloths in warm water and gripping a soft ball will be helpful.

It will take a further 1-2 months before you are able to return to all your normal activities.

Complications following this injury are relatively low, but it will depend on how complex the injury is and your general medical health. Most people can expect some long-term stiffness in the wrist but this varies considerably from person to person.

Any further questions, please contact your Physiotherapy Department.

Doncaster Royal Infirmary 01302644210

Bassetlaw Hospital 01909 572302

Montagu Hospital 01709 649190

Retford Hospital 01777 863400

For out of hours nurse advice, contact the Emergency Department

Doncaster Royal Infirmary 01302 642335

Bassetlaw Hospital 01909 572049.

Patient Experience Team

The team are available to help with any concerns/complaints you may have about your experience at the Trust. Their office is in the Main Foyer (Gate 4) of Doncaster Royal Infirmary. Contact can be made either in person, by telephone or email.

The contact details are:

Telephone: 01302 642764 or 0800 028 8059

Email: dbth.pals.dbh@nhs.net

