



York and Scarborough
Teaching Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

General Advice Following a Wrist Fracture

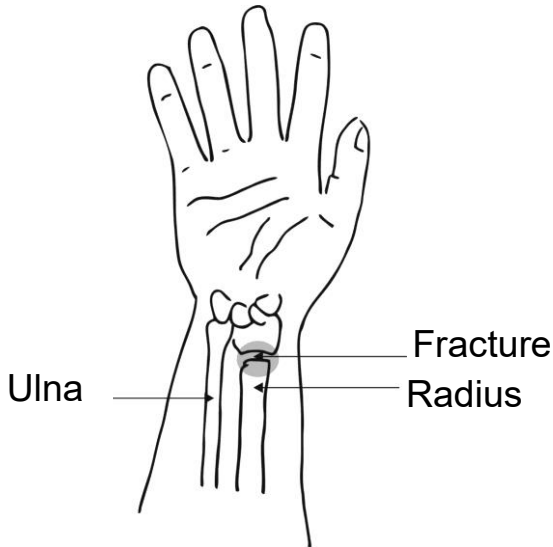
Information for patients, relatives and carers

① For more information, please contact:
Orthopaedic Clinic on 01904 726537

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What is a distal radius or wrist fracture?

It is a break in one of the long forearm bones (radius) at your wrist; you can also break the ulna at the same time.



Treatment can vary depending on the location and type of fracture.

Surgery may be performed to wire, pin or plate the bones if fragments are displaced, followed by a period in a cast or splint. If surgery is not required a cast or splint may still be used for a period of time.

Why do I need a cast/splint?

The cast will support the bone while it heals and reduce your pain.

How can I reduce swelling, pain and stiffness?

You may notice swelling in your arm, wrist or hand. It is important to manage this by keeping your hand elevated. To keep swelling to a minimum:

1. Always rest with your hand higher than your elbow
2. When walking, do not hang your arm by your side
3. When able, put your hand high in the air like you are asking a question. Close your hand into a fist then open and spread your fingers wide.

Do not replace any rings until all your swelling has completely settled.

Fractures can be painful. It is important to keep your pain under control. Simple analgesia taken regularly can help over short periods of time.

Important: If your pain becomes severe or constant you should contact your orthopaedic consultant or your GP immediately.

It is important to keep your hand and fingers moving despite your injury otherwise your hand may become painful and stiff. Try to use your hand for activities such as eating and dressing.

Exercises to do while the cast is on:

Regular movement of your shoulder, elbow and fingers will limit stiffness and speed up your recovery.

Shoulder:

Lift your hand right above your head as high as you can and lower it down

Video: <http://youtu.be/YcyVC4EzUil>

Touch your hand to the back of your neck.

Video: <http://youtu.be/R4dwCiMMys8>

Put your hand behind your back as high as you can.

Video: <http://youtu.be/iQp3APdtnDM>

Elbow:

Bend your elbow fully and straighten fully.

Video: <http://youtu.be/p9NWdru3m0o>

Forearm:

With your elbow tucked in to your side and bent to 90 degrees, turn your forearm over so your palm faces up to the ceiling and then down to the floor.

Video: <http://youtu.be/1vNGtyv0xbo>

Fingers:

Curl all your fingers into a fist and straighten.

Video: <http://youtu.be/4NZ2drULuzc>

Try and touch the tip of your thumb to the tip of each finger. Video: <http://youtu.be/BSyip8aUsqI>

What happens when my cast is removed?

You may notice that your skin is dry and flaky and there may be extra hair growth. This is perfectly normal. After washing the arm you can apply a non-perfumed cream to moisturise the skin.

You may be provided with a splint to support your wrist for the first few days. It can be removed if you feel comfortable. It must be removed during the day to perform regular exercises.

Most people do not require physiotherapy support if they follow the advice on this exercise sheet. If you are struggling with excessive stiffness or pain please seek advice from the orthopaedic team.

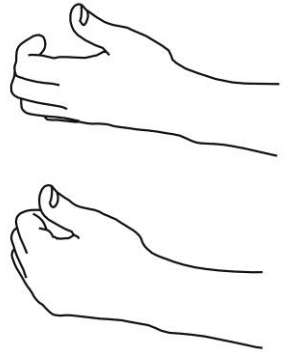
Exercises to do when your cast comes off:

Finger flexion active

Make a fist with your hand. Hold this position, and then relax the fingers. Use this exercise to increase finger mobility, especially if you have difficulty gripping.

Repeat 5 times | Perform 3 times daily

Video: <http://youtu.be/4NZ2drULuzc>



Thumb opposition

Move your thumb to touch the tip of your index finger, pinch them together, then release. Repeat for every finger.

Repeat 5 times | Perform 3 times daily

Video: <http://youtu.be/BSyip8aUsqI>

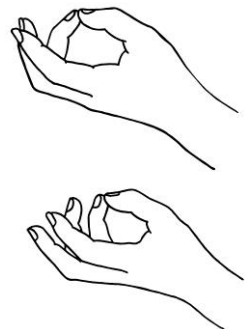
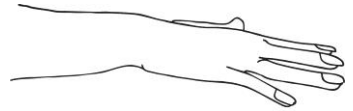


Table flexion

Place your palm flat on a table.
Keeping your finger tips on the table, lift
your palm up and slide your fingers
backwards along the table.



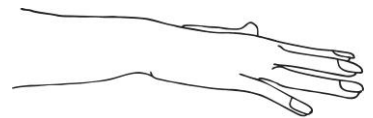
Repeat 10 times | Perform 3 times daily

Video: <http://youtu.be/xLS4QqfJ-Es>



Wrist flexion and extension

Relax your forearm on a table, with your
hand hanging over the edge of the table.
Using your stronger arm to assist the
weaker arm, bend your wrist downwards,
and then upwards, and repeat. This
exercise can be used to improve the
mobility of your wrist.



Hold for 5 seconds | Repeat 5 times |
Perform 3 times daily



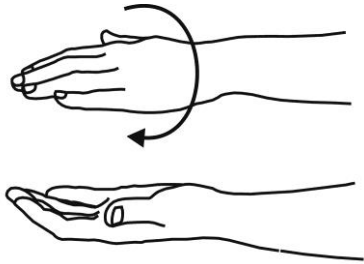
Video: <https://youtu.be/nJPzW3RiyQ4>

Pronation/Supination

Bend your arm to 90 degrees, and rotate your forearm up and down.

Repeat 10 times | Perform 3 times daily

Video: <http://youtu.be/1vNGtyv0xbo>

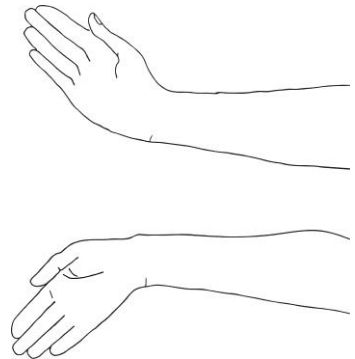


Ulnar and radial deviation

Hold your arm in front of you, with your thumb facing up. Deviate your hand to one side, and then the other.

Repeat 10 times times | Perform 3 times daily

Video: <http://youtu.be/PQ33Dz5eoDE>

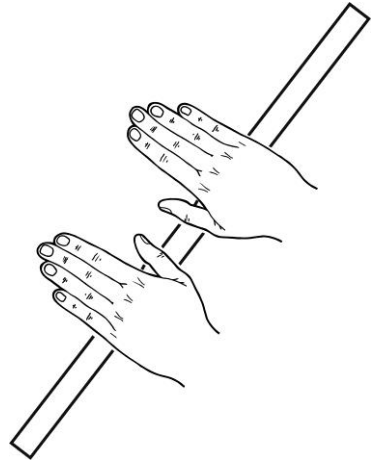


Wrist roller

Sit or stand. Hold on to a dowel rod, stick, bar or rolling pin, with your palms facing down. Roll the dowel rod in one direction, and then the other. You can also roll the dowel rod with the palms facing up as a variation.

Repeat 10 times | Perform 3 times daily

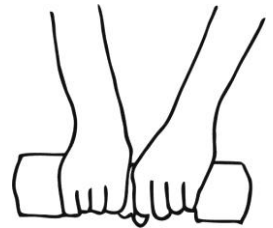
Video: <http://youtu.be/Zmq79mW27ic>



Once you are able to perform the previous exercises fairly easily, the next set of exercises will help you build up strength in your wrist and hand.

Wrist roller dumbbell/barbell

Hold on to a barbell or dumbbell with your palms facing down. Roll the dumbbell in one direction, and then the other. You can also roll the dumbbell with the palms facing up as a variation.

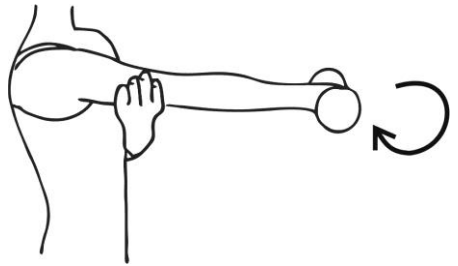


Repeat 10 times (3 sets) | Perform 1 times daily

Video: <http://youtu.be/esVkv4xwg38>

Supination and pronation DB straight arm

Hold a dumbbell with a straight arm, and rotate your forearm outwards and then inwards. Keep your shoulder as still as possible.



Repeat 10 times (3 sets)
Perform 1 times daily

Video: <http://youtu.be/UJmxxo-r9Wac>

Ball squeeze

Squeeze a small ball in your hand. Use this to strengthen your thumb and fingers. You can also use putty, a small towel, or other small squeeze items.



Repeat 10 times (3 sets) | Perform 1 times daily

Video: <http://youtu.be/EMx8Ufccvik>

Is there anything I need to look out for?

You should monitor your arm and hand for any of the following problems:

Pins and needles or numbness in your fingers. The median nerve in the wrist can sometimes be compressed as a result of the injury or swelling you may develop afterwards. Occasionally this may require additional treatment. Please tell the orthopaedic team or GP.

Thumb problems. If you are unable to straighten the tip of your thumb please mention this to one of your orthopaedic team or your GP. It may be that the tendon that straightens your thumb has also been injured.

Skin problems. If your skin becomes sore or is being rubbed by the cast or splint please contact the plaster room or orthopaedic team.

When can I return to driving?

You can drive when you are safe and able to control your vehicle. You can discuss this with the orthopaedic team if you are unsure.

When can I return to work?

This will depend on the demands of your job. If you have an office job returning to work for light duties should be possible but you should avoid things that make your wrist uncomfortable such as prolonged typing. For manual work requiring lifting you may need longer depending on the extent of your injury.

Tell us what you think of this leaflet

We hope that you found this leaflet helpful. If you would like to tell us what you think, please contact:

Jayne Lenighan, Advanced Nurse Practitioner,
Hand Surgery, Orthopaedics, The York Hospital,
Wigginton Road, York, YO31 8HE or telephone
01904 725978.

Teaching, training and research

Our Trust is committed to teaching, training and research to support the development of health and healthcare in our community. Healthcare students may observe consultations for this purpose. You can opt out if you do not want students to observe. We may also ask you if you would like to be involved in our research.

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS offers impartial advice and assistance to patients, their relatives, friends and carers. We can listen to feedback (positive or negative), answer questions and help resolve any concerns about Trust services.

PALS can be contacted on 01904 726262, or email pals@york.nhs.uk.

An answer phone is available out of hours.

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Telephone: 01904 725566

Email: access@york.nhs.uk

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