

INFORMATION FOR PATIENTS

Advice following surgery for wrist fractures

After you have had your surgery, it is likely that your hand will be put in a dressing or removable splint. Your fingers and thumb will be left free, and it is important to keep these moving to avoid stiffness or complications when you are out of the supports.

Expectations

Some fractures may be immobilised in a cast or a splint for the first four to six weeks (this will vary depending on the treatment and type of fracture).

Pain

Fractures can be very painful, and it is important to monitor your pain levels and keep your pain under control. Keep on top of your prescribed pain relief; if you do not feel your pain is under control, please consult your GP.

Swelling

Due to the inflammation and healing process, it is likely that your arm and hand will be swollen for some time after the injury. In order to get the best movement back in your hand, it is important to minimise swelling as much as possible. Try to keep your arm elevated above heart level as much as possible at rest and use a cold compress, such as ice or a bag of frozen peas, wrapped in a damp tea towel for 10-15 minutes, two to three times daily.

Stiffness

While immobilised it is important to keep your fingers and thumb moving as much as possible. In addition to this you should try to keep your elbow and shoulder moving through range.

Weakness

It is likely that your wrist and hand will be weak, especially after being immobilised for some time. Do not try to lift or carry heavy objects until instructed to do so. As the fracture begins to heal you will be able to do and carry more with that side.

Using your hand

For the first six weeks, try to use your fingers and thumb as normally as possible while in the support during light activities. Avoid any heavy lifting for the first six weeks (nothing heavier than a mug) and do not lean on your hand.

Driving

If you have stitches, a dressing, plaster or splints, your insurance will not be valid if you are involved in an accident. It is therefore advisable not to drive until you have full range of movement and strength. Discuss your safety with a doctor before driving again.

Showering / washing

You will need to keep your dressing dry when washing and showering. You can purchase dressing bag covers online, or alternatively try to keep it dry with a plastic bag.

Sick note

If you require a sick note for work, this can be obtained from your GP.

Returning to activity

Once the plaster has been removed, you can gradually start to return to your normal activity, unless advised otherwise. If you have specific requirements, please state these at your follow up appointment, occupational therapy appointment or to your GP.

Exercises

To avoid prolonged complications as a result of immobilisation, it is important to carry out a set of exercises while in the support. These help to keep the tendons in the hand moving well under the scar tissue and help to avoid the hand feeling stiff once the fracture is healed.

Repeat each of the following exercises 10 times, every hour as tolerated.

Open hand

Open out your hand and fingers as much as possible.



Roof top

Bend from your knuckles, keeping the rest of your fingers straight.



Half fist

Keep your knuckles still and bend the other joints in your fingers.



Full fist

Bend all your finger joints to make a full fist.



Thumb

Take your thumb out to the side and back to your palm. Make an OK sign with your thumb and each finger



Elbow

Bend and straighten your elbow as much as possible.



Shoulder

Keeping your elbow straight, take your hand out in front of you and then out to the side.



Further sources of information

NHS Choices: www.nhs.uk/conditions

Our website: www.sfh-tr.nhs.uk

Patient Experience Team (PET)

PET is available to help with any of your compliments, concerns or complaints, and will ensure a prompt and efficient service.

King's Mill Hospital: 01623 672222

Newark Hospital: 01636 685692

Email: sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net

If you would like this information in an alternative format, for example large print or easy read, or if you need help with communicating with us, for example because you use British Sign Language, please let us know. You can call the Patient Experience Team on 01623 672222 or email sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net.

This document is intended for information purposes only and should not replace advice that your relevant health professional would give you. External websites may be referred to in specific cases. Any external websites are provided for your information and convenience. We cannot accept responsibility for the information found on them. If you require a full list of references (if relevant) for this leaflet, please email sfh-tr.patientinformation@nhs.net or telephone 01623 622515, extension 6927.

To be completed by the Communications office
Leaflet code: PIL202407-04-ASWF
Created: December 2018 / Revised: July 2024 / Review
Date: July 2026