

# Wrist and hand fracture - A guide to help you recover following your injury

This leaflet offers advice and some simple exercises to help improve joint flexibility, muscle strength and function after the removal of your cast.

**If your wrist remains significantly stiff, or the pain is worsening or not improving in 4 weeks, please contact the Fracture Clinic Helpline on 01484 342559.**

## Common symptoms after the cast has been removed:

**Stiffness** - This naturally occurs whenever part of the body is held in one position for a period of time but this is an essential process to allow the bone to heal.

**Pain** - This may be due to stiffness and swelling which is a natural part of the healing process.

**Swelling** - This often increases once the cast has been removed due to the removal of the support that the wrist/hand has got used to being there.

**Weakness** - This is due to the lack of muscle activity whilst the wrist/hand has been immobilised and the relative reduction in activity of the arm in general.

**Difficulty with activities of daily living** - This is the result of the above symptoms combined.

**Dry skin/excess hair growth** - This is due to being in cast for several weeks.

## What you can do to help

**Stiffness** - Start to exercise your wrist and hand straight away and use as normally as possible for light activities following the removal of your cast. It will feel very uncomfortable initially but it does get easier over time. Try the exercises in this leaflet. It is also important to maintain full mobility in the other joints of your arm to ensure optimum function.

**Pain** - Painkillers can be helpful. Ask your GP or pharmacist for advice on appropriate medication.

If you soak your hand in warm water whilst exercising your wrist, this can help to reduce pain and stiffness.

**Swelling** - When you are not using your hand, keep it raised up as much as possible. One way that you can do this is by placing it on your opposite shoulder. The use of ice can help with pain and inflammation. Use crushed ice cubes or a bag of frozen peas. Protect the skin from an ice burn by placing the ice pack in a wet towel. Leave in place for 10-15 minutes. It can be reapplied after 2 hours if you wish. It's normal for the skin to become pink with either heat or ice, however if you experience discomfort or a burning sensation remove the item immediately. Don't apply heat or ice packs if you have poor skin sensation or poor circulation, if you are diabetic or over areas of infection. Another option is to try contrast bathing. Using heat and cold together can help (may be useful to) reduce pain and inflammation.

1. Place heat on the affected area (under heat) or place in warm water for 1 minute.
2. Then place cold on the affected area (under cold) or place in cold water for 2 minutes.
3. Repeat this process 5 times, for a total of 15 minutes.
4. Always finish in cold water and then dry the area thoroughly.

**Please note:** It is normal for the skin to become pink with either heat or ice, however, if you experience discomfort or a burning sensation remove the item immediately. Ultimately exercise and normal use will reduce swelling and pain.

**If you notice increasing skin sensitivity, increasing stiffness or pain despite regular exercise, SEEK MEDICAL ADVICE.**

**Weakness** - Improve your grip strength using functional activities such as wringing towels or a dishcloth until your muscles feel achy. Consider using products such as plastercine, play-putty or even baking dough to practice squeezing.

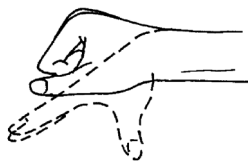
**Difficulty with activities of daily living** - Your hand and wrist strength and movement will be reduced. Gradually start to use your hand and wrist more regularly and it will improve over time.

**DO NOT lift or bear weight through the wrist for at least 6 weeks following your fracture. You can then build up gradually as comfort allows.**

**Dry skin/excessive hair growth** - Wash the arm with warm water and use a basic moisturiser such as an aqueous cream for the first few days. Excessive hair growth is normal after coming out of a cast and will resolve in time.

## The Exercises

The exercises will be most effective if practised regularly. We recommend doing the exercises 3 to 4 times a day. Try 10 repetitions of each one.



Open and close your hand.  
Once you can make a full fist, add some resistance, for example, use a stress ball or dough. Repeat until it feels tiring.



Bring your thumb to the base of your little finger;  
bring your thumb back.



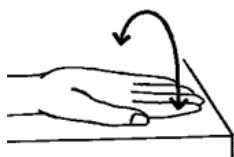
Rest your hand on a table, slide your hand wrist first  
towards the little finger and then towards the thumb.



Forearm supported on a table, hand relaxed over the edge.  
Bend your wrist downwards and then upwards. Keep your  
forearm still.



Sit or stand, place your hands together. Bring your elbows  
up whilst your keeping your palms together. Hold for a few  
seconds and then release slowly.



Forearm on table. Turn your palm up and then down.  
Keep your elbow still.

If you feel that you require Physiotherapy following your fractured wrist or hand, you can contact the Fracture Clinic Helpline and they will make the referral.

Should you have any worries or concerns following discharge from hospital, please contact:

Fracture Clinic Helpline - 01484 342559  
9.00am - 4.00pm Monday to Friday

**For urgent concerns, contact the Emergency Department:**

Huddersfield Royal Infirmary - 01484 342396  
Calderdale Royal Hospital - 01422 222325

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**If you have any comments about this leaflet, you can contact :**

Physiotherapy Department  
Huddersfield Royal Infirmary

Telephone: 01484 342434  
MSK Physiotherapy Admin Office: 01484 905380

[www.cht.nhs.uk](http://www.cht.nhs.uk)

**If you would like this information in another format or language contact the above.**

Potřebujete-li tyto informace v jiném formátu nebo jazyce,  
obraťte se prosím na výše uvedené oddělení

Jeżeli są Państwo zainteresowani otrzymaniem tych  
informacji w innym formacie lub wersji językowej,  
prosimy skontaktować się z nami, korzystając z ww.  
danych kontaktowych

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ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਉਪਰੋਕਤ ਵਿਭਾਗ ਵਿੱਚ ਸਾਡੇ ਨਾਲ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰੋ।

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برائے مہربانی مندرجہ بالا شعبے میں ہم سے رابطہ کریں۔

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المذكور أعلاه"