

## Musculoskeletal Physiotherapy Outpatient Department

### Information Following Your Wrist Fracture

This information leaflet has been provided by the Physiotherapy department to assist you in returning back to normal following your wrist fracture. The following information will give you some advice and exercises to do while you wait to start your physiotherapy sessions. If you have any queries about the information provided in this leaflet, please call the Physiotherapy department Monday – Friday between 09.00 – 16.00.



#### **Removal of Cast**

Following your fracture, you may be required to have a period of immobilisation in a cast to allow the fracture to heal. When your Consultant thinks you are ready, they will allow this to be removed and you may be issued with a removable splint. For the first couple of weeks, it is advisable to keep this splint on at night and during vulnerable situations, for example, in busy places if you are worried about people bumping into your wrist. It is important, however, that you remove the splint 3 -4 times a day to start gently moving your wrist to prevent the wrist from becoming stiff. See exercises below.

It is common for your wrist to feel uncomfortable when your plaster cast is removed, and your skin may be dry and flaky. If you are satisfied that your wound has healed you may soak your wrist in warm water to help with this, as well as gently massaging the area with a plain/non-perfumed moisturiser.

In addition to this, warm water can help to reduce your pain and can make movement feel easier. Therefore, doing some of the exercises below in the water or after a bath/shower may be a more comfortable way of doing the exercises.

#### **If you have had an operation for your fracture**

It is important that you ensure your wound has completely healed with no open or wet patches and stitches should be removed before getting the wound wet. This is to minimise your risk of obtaining a post-operative infection.

#### **If you experience any of the following:**

- Severe unrelenting or worsening pain
- Worsening hot/red/swollen wound
- Fever or temperature
- A wound that is oozing or smells

**Contact your GP and ask for an urgent appointment or call 111 as it is important to rule out a wound infection.**

## **Pain Relief**

Sometimes it is necessary to take pain relief to help you to move your wrist more comfortably. You may have been prescribed some by a doctor or you may wish to discuss your needs with a pharmacist. You may also wish to try heat and ice as described below to help reduce your pain.

**Application of ice:** Place a wet tea towel directly over your skin, and then place a bag of frozen peas on top of the towel. Keep the peas on for 15 – 20 minutes, checking your skin regularly to avoid an ice burn. Repeat up to 3 times a day.

**Application of Heat:** Use a microwaveable wheat bag or wrap a hot water bottle in a towel and place over the area. Keep it on for 15 – 20 minutes, checking your skin from time to time. Repeat up to three times a day.

**Hypersensitivity:** If your wrist/hand is becoming hypersensitive even to light touch then please discuss this with your physiotherapist who will advise you further.

## **Managing Swelling**

Whilst a sling is not necessary, it is important to elevate your hand and wrist above your heart when you can. This is important, as swelling can reduce the range of movement in your wrist, hand and fingers and can make you feel more stiff and sore. Try to move your shoulder and elbow as you normally would to ensure that these joints do not get stiff.

You may notice that your swelling worsens if you are overusing your wrist. It is advisable that for the first 6 weeks following your fracture, you do not lift anything heavier than a cup of tea.

## **Driving**

You may return to driving once when you feel confident that you can safely control your vehicle and perform an emergency stop. It is advisable to inform the DVLA and your insurance company that you are returning to driving.

## **Smoking Cessation**

Evidence has shown that smoking prolongs fracture healing time. It is important that you consider this information with relation to your recent injury. Stopping smoking during the healing phase of your fracture will help ensure optimal recovery from this injury. For advice on smoking cessation and local support available, please refer to the following website: <http://smokefree.nhs.uk> or discuss this with your GP.

## **Exercises**

The exercises overleaf are aimed at helping you to regain range of movement in your wrist and to prevent your wrist from becoming stiff. We would advise that you complete your exercises 3-4 times a day.

It is important that you do not push through pain that you would describe as being more than a 5/10. Any pain or discomfort after you have stopped exercising should settle down within 1 hour of you stopping the exercises. If your pain is still worse as a result of the exercises, you could be overdoing them, try moving your wrist more gently and slowly and consider doing less repetitions.

## Stage One Wrist Exercises – from removal of cast

If you have any queries/concerns about your exercises, please call the physiotherapy department on: 01603 286990



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Rest your forearm on a table/the arm of a chair with your wrist and hand over the edge.  
Curl your fingers and lift your hand upwards keeping your forearm touching the table. Do not push through pain. Repeat 5 - 10 times.



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Rest your forearm on a table/the arm of a chair with your wrist and hand over the edge.  
Straighten your fingers and lower your hand towards the floor keeping your forearm touching the table.  
Do not push through pain.

Repeat 5 - 10 times.



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Position your forearm, wrist and hand so that they are supported on a table. Put a piece of paper under your hand to reduce friction and then turn your hand outwards towards the little finger and then inwards towards the thumb. Do not push through pain.

Repeat 5 - 10 times.



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Stand or sit with your elbow bent and palm turned down.  
Turn your palm up towards the ceiling and then down towards the floor. Do not push through pain.

Repeat 5 - 10 times.



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Make a fist and then straighten your fingers.  
If you cannot make a fist use your other hand to bring your fingers closer to your palm.  
Repeat 10 times.



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If you cannot make a full fist then try to make a hook with your fingers as shown in the picture.  
Use the finger and thumb of your other hand to push your nail closer to your palm.

Hold for 20 seconds.  
Repeat 3 times.

## **Stage Two Wrist Exercises: 6-8 weeks post fracture**

If you have any queries/concerns about your exercises, please call the physiotherapy department on: 01603 286990



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You can now use your other hand to help improve your wrist range of movement. Please do not worry if you cannot achieve as much movement as the pictures demonstrate. Do not push through pain.

Repeat the exercises 3-4 times a day.



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Forearm supported on a table with your hand over the edge and palm facing down. Let your hand drop down. Gently assist the movement with your other hand. Do not push through pain.

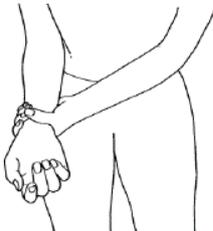
Hold for 20 seconds. Repeat 3 times.



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Stand or sit. Put your palms together and lift your elbows keeping palms together to stretch your wrist. Do not push through pain.

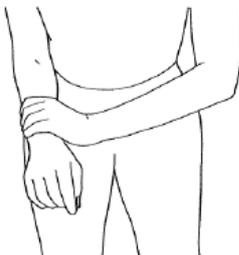
Hold 20 seconds. Repeat 3 times.



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Sit/stand with your elbow tucked into your side - use your other hand to help turn your palm to the ceiling. Do not push through pain.

Hold for 20 seconds. Repeat 3 times.



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Sit/stand with your elbow tucked into your side - use your other hand to help turn your palm to the floor. Do not push through pain.

Hold for 20 seconds. Repeat 3 times.



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Clasp your hands together and support your forearms on a table with your hands over the edge. Bend your wrist up and down.

Repeat 5 – 10 times.

## **Stage Three Wrist Exercises (8-10 weeks post fracture)**

If you have any queries/concerns about your exercises, please call the physiotherapy department on: 01603 286990



The following exercises are designed to help you to strengthen your wrist. It is important that you do this gradually: starting with a light weight such as a rolling pin, a small can of vegetables or a small bottle of water.

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Sit beside a table with your lower arm supported on the table. Hold a light weight with your palm facing down and your wrist over the edge of the table. Keep your forearm touching the table and slowly lower the weight down and then raise back up.

Repeat 5 - 10 times.



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Sit beside a table, holding a weight in one hand. Support your forearm on the table, so that your wrist is over the edge and palm is facing upwards. Keeping the back of your arm on the table slowly raise the weight up towards you and then lower back down.

Repeat 5 - 10 times



Hold a weight with your forearm supported on your thigh, wrist hanging over your knee and thumb upwards. Bend your gently wrist up and down.

Repeat 5 - 10 times.



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Sit with your forearms supported on your thighs and wrists hanging over your knees. Hold the weight in your hand with your palms facing upwards and wrists at neutral position (straight line from elbow to knuckles). Start rotating your palms to face downwards and then upwards.

Repeat 5 - 10 times.



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If you have a stress ball or a sponge at home - gently squeeze with your fingers to improve your grip strength. Alternatively, you could roll up a ball of socks and use this as a makeshift stress ball to squeeze.

Repeat 5 - 10 times.

## **Stage Four Wrist Exercises (10-12 weeks post fracture)**

If you have any queries/concerns about your exercises, please call the physiotherapy department on: 01603 286990



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At 10-12 weeks after your injury, you can start taking some body weight through your wrist.

The exercises on this sheet are in order of difficulty. Only progress on to the next exercise if the one before has felt comfortable and easy.

If you are not aiming to get back to doing press ups / return to high level strength, then you may only do choose to do the first 2-3 exercises.



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Lean against a wall with straight arms and fingers pointing upwards. Keeping both hands on the wall shift your weight from your right hand to your left hand.

Repeat 5 - 10 times.



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Stand with the palms of your hands on a table. Keep your arms straight and fingers pointing forwards.

Press down and straighten your fingers against the table. Keeping both hands on the table shift your body weight from one hand to the other.

Repeat 5 - 10 times.



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On all fours keeping your elbows straight and keeping both hands flat on the floor, shift your body weight gently forwards and backwards over your hands as pain allows.

Then try shifting your body weight gently to the right and to the left. Repeat 5 - 10 times.



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If you are aiming to increase your strength further, a good starting point is trying a wall push up.

Stand facing a wall with your arms straight and hands on the wall. Do push-ups against the wall keeping your body in a straight line.

Repeat 5 - 10 times.

## **Stage Four Wrist Exercises Part 2: (10-12 weeks post fracture)**

If you have any queries/concerns about your exercises, please call the physiotherapy department on: 01603 286990



If wall push ups feel comfortable, next progress to push ups on your hands and knees.

On your hands and knees, hands slightly wider than shoulders. Buttocks and trunk active, body in a straight line. In a controlled manner lower your chest close to the floor. Push back up.

Repeat 5 - 10 times.



If all previous exercises have felt easy and comfortable you may now try a full push up.

Start on your hands and toes, body in a straight line and hands wider than shoulder-width. Press your hands against the floor.

Lower your chest towards the floor while maintaining the straight line of the body. Forearms should stay as upright as possible. Push back to the starting position.

Repeat 5 - 10 times.

**For further information please contact:** Musculoskeletal Physiotherapy Outpatient Department Telephone: 01603 286990 Monday to Friday between 09.00 - 16.00