

# Wrist fracture manipulation

Accident and emergency

Patient information

## What is this information about?

This information is designed for people who have suffered a wrist fracture (or broken wrist).

We may need to manipulate your broken bones to improve their position.

Your broken wrist has been placed in a plaster backslab (a half plaster cast). Once the swelling goes down, this will be changed to a full plaster cast to keep the wrist still while it heals.

You have been referred to the fracture clinic for ongoing care. Please make sure we have your updated contact information.

The fracture clinic will arrange for a full plaster cast, which will stay on for up to six weeks. After the cast is removed, your wrist will need an additional six weeks to fully strengthen.

## Wrist fractures

You have broken one or more bones in your wrist. This can cause pain, swelling, deformity, numbness or tingling, and possibly an open wound.

Please remove all jewellery from the affected hand to prevent further injury due to swelling. If necessary, we may need to cut off any rings for your safety.

In most cases, the bones in wrist fractures are close together, so a plaster cast is usually enough to manage the injury (undisplaced wrist fracture). If the bones are too far apart, we may need to realign them (displaced wrist fracture).

It is important that the bones are in the correct position to ensure proper function of the muscles, nerves, and blood vessels in your wrist

and hand and to prevent damage to the nerves caused by swelling.

Your wrist is currently in a backslab (half plaster cast) to keep it still while healing.

We have referred you to the fracture clinic for further care.

You will be sent home with a sling to help keep your wrist elevated and reduce swelling.

### Be aware

It is really important to keep your wrist elevated (raised up). If not, swelling may move into your hand, causing numbness and discomfort. If this happens, contact your GP or visit the Emergency Department.

## Manipulating (moving) your fracture

If necessary, we may manipulate the broken bones to improve their position and prevent complications. This will be done after numbing your wrist.

### There are different ways to numb your wrist:

- **Entonox (laughing gas and oxygen):** This may cause nausea or headaches.
- **Haematoma block:** An injection of local anaesthetic into the fracture site. It causes minimal side effects but may be a little painful at first.
- **IV morphine:** This may cause nausea or confusion.
- **IV anaesthetic drugs:** These will make you feel sleepy and may affect your blood pressure and heart rate.
- **Penthrox:** A hand held device to deliver short term pain relief.

We will closely monitor you during the use of these pain relief methods. Let staff know if you feel unwell or need additional pain relief.

## What should I do when my wrist is in a cast?

### Do

- ✓ Keep your injured arm raised with your hand above your elbow, especially during the first week.
- ✓ Avoid letting your hand rest by your side. Use a sling or pillows to help reduce swelling and keep the cast from becoming too tight.
- ✓ Move unaffected joints, like your fingers, as much as possible.
- ✓ Use your affected hand only for light activities.
- ✓ Take adequate pain relief to help your recovery. If you are in severe pain, consult your pharmacist or GP for advice.

### Do not

- ✗ Rest on the plaster for the first 48 hours.
- ✗ Place anything heavy on the cast.
- ✗ Cut your cast. If it needs trimming, return to the hospital.
- ✗ Get the cast wet. Cover it with a plastic bag or other waterproof material when bathing or showering.
- ✗ Insert anything into the cast, as this could injure your skin or cause infection.

## Who can I contact for advice?

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the Virtual Fracture Clinic.

### Virtual Fracture Clinic

01273 696955 Ext. 63428

## When to go back to hospital

Return to the Emergency Department immediately if you experience any of the following:

- Increased pain or swelling.
- Numbness or pins and needles in the affected arm.
- Inability to move your fingers.
- Blueness in your fingers.
- If the cast cracks, becomes loose, or rubs against your skin.

For general medical advice please use the NHS website, the **NHS 111** service, walk-in-centres, or your GP.

NHS website [www.nhs.uk/](http://www.nhs.uk/) provides online health information and guidance

There are walk-in and urgent treatment services at Brighton Station, Crawley Urgent Treatment Centre, Lewes Victoria Hospital, Horsham Minor Injuries Unit and Bognor Regis War Memorial Hospital.





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