

Scaphoid fracture

Accident and emergency

Patient information

What is a scaphoid fracture?

The scaphoid is a small bone located on the thumb side of your wrist. **It is commonly injured by:**

- Falling onto an outstretched hand
- A direct blow to the wrist
- Punching or impact injuries.

Sometimes, a scaphoid fracture doesn't show up clearly on the first X-ray. Even if no fracture is seen, if the doctor suspects one based on your symptoms, they will treat it as a fracture to avoid complications.

Initial treatment

- You will have a plaster cast placed on your wrist and thumb to limit movement and support healing.
- This cast is usually a partial (backslab) cast held in place with bandages.
- Keep your arm elevated in a sling to reduce swelling and pain.
- Take painkillers as prescribed to manage discomfort and swelling.
- You may use the hand as pain allows, but avoid heavy lifting or strain.
- Healing usually takes 4 to 6 weeks.

Follow-up care

- You have been referred to the Fracture Clinic for ongoing care. Please ensure we have your correct contact details.
- If you do not receive an appointment within 3 working days, call the Hand and Wrist Fracture Clinic on the contact details below.
- Most scaphoid fractures heal well with proper treatment. However, some types may not heal on their own and could require surgery. Your orthopaedic team will monitor your healing with follow-up appointments and imaging.

What to expect at follow-up appointments

0 to 6 weeks after injury

- You will be seen in Fracture Clinic about 2 weeks after your injury. Your cast may be changed to a full plaster cast if swelling has gone down.
- Additional scans may be arranged to confirm the fracture and assess healing.

6 to 12 weeks after injury

- At your next clinic visit (around 6–12 weeks), your cast will likely be removed.
- You may have another X-ray without the cast to check bone healing.
- If you still have pain, a wrist splint may be given instead of another cast.

After 12 weeks

- In some cases, healing may take longer, up to 6 months, especially if the fracture is in a part of the bone that heals more slowly.
- If you are still experiencing significant pain or swelling after 12 weeks, contact the Fracture Clinic for advice.

When to seek immediate help

Please return to the Emergency Department or contact the Fracture Clinic if you notice:

- The cast becomes loose, cracked, or starts rubbing your skin
- Worsening pain
- Increased swelling
- Numbness or tingling (pins and needles)
- Inability to move your fingers
- Fingers turning blue.

What if I need help or have questions?

If you have any concerns, new symptoms, or have not received your follow-up appointment, contact the Hand and Wrist Fracture Clinic.

Hand and Wrist Fracture Clinic

For Brighton and Haywards Heath Hospitals

01273 696955 Ext. 64116

For St Richard's or Worthing Hospitals

01903 205111 Ext. 86312

Further support

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

The **NHS website** 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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This information is intended for patients receiving care in Brighton & Hove or Haywards Heath.

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