

# Therapy advice after a wrist fracture



University Hospitals Birmingham  
NHS Foundation Trust

## Recovery

Once out of plaster, most patients will return to normal function within 6-12 weeks. Therefore, routine referrals to therapy are not always needed.

## Exercise

It is important that you perform your exercises at least 3 times a day in order to regain movement and strength in your wrist, hand and fingers.

## Skin

After the plaster has been removed, your skin may be dry and flaky. To improve the condition of the skin, soak the arm in a bowl of warm soapy water, dry with a towel and then massage oil or cream into the affected area.

## Pain and swelling

It is normal to have some discomfort and swelling after a fracture. Continue to take painkillers (analgesics) as prescribed by your doctor as necessary. If you feel the pain is severe and you are unable to perform your exercises, discuss with your doctor in the fracture clinic or your GP.

It is normal for your arm to be swollen for the first few weeks after your cast is removed. Swelling may increase after exercising initially. To help manage this, try and keep your arm elevated above your heart when resting.

## Ice

Ice can often help to reduce swelling and pain:

1. Prepare the ice pack or a bag of frozen peas wrapped in a damp tea towel
2. Place a dry towel or plastic bag underneath your arm, resting it on a table for support
3. Place the ice pack around the wrist for 10-15 minutes
4. Repeat as often as required. Please note frozen peas must be clearly marked and should not be eaten after use as an ice pack.

## Activity

Begin initially with lighter duties (opening doors, washing up, dusting etc). Avoid heavy lifting (e.g. a full kettle) and activities that cause severe pain. For advice on driving and returning to work please consult the distal radius fracture FAQ leaflet.

## Exercises

Complete all of these exercises at least 10 times, 3 times per day.

### 1. Wrist flexion/extension

- Sit up straight with your elbow tucked in by your side and your forearm pointing straight in front of you
- Bring your palm towards you, bending at the wrist
- Move your palm away from you, extending the wrist
- Repeat.



## 2. Wrist deviation

- With your wrist straight, bring your thumb and fingers away from your body and then bring them towards your body
- **Note:** This movement is intended to only occur at the wrist. Your forearm should not move from its original position, only your hand should move
- Repeat.



## 3. Wrist supination/pronation

- Sit up straight in a chair with your forearm supported on a table
- With your elbow bent, turn your palm up to face the ceiling, then down to face the ground as much as possible
- Repeat.



## 4. Finger flexion

- Make a fist
- Hold for 5-10 seconds
- Relax your hand
- Repeat.



## 5. Base of finger opposition

- Touch the base of each of your fingers with the tip of your thumb
- Repeat.



## Follow-up

Should you feel you require more support with your recovery and exercises, you can request a therapy referral at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital via your hospital doctor or GP. Some local therapy services also accept self-referral.

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