

INFORMATION FOR PATIENTS

How to manage a wrist fracture while in cast

To access this information in video format please scan the following QR code or copy the weblink into your browser.



[Orthopaedic Hand Therapy Patient
Information Video | SFH
\(youtube.com\)](#)

This leaflet and video provide advice and exercises which can improve your outcome following your injury. We will also discuss what to expect when your plaster cast is removed. This injury might be referred to as a wrist fracture (a fracture is a break of the bone).

What can I do while I am in cast?

There are several things that you can do to reduce your pain and aid your recovery:

- **Swelling**

Your hand and arm may swell because of your injury. Swelling may increase your pain as it puts increased pressure on the injured parts. Persistent swelling can cause your joints to become stiff. Stiffness of the unaffected joints may delay your return to work or affect your ability to perform activities of daily living. You may have been provided with a sling, which can be beneficial in the first few days. However, continued use of this should be avoided as it can cause stiffness and affect your shoulder.

Pain and swelling are normal symptoms when you break a bone. To help manage this, regular elevation is beneficial. Elevation allows swelling to drain away. For elevation to work effectively, you should make sure that your hand is higher than your elbow. Do not sit with your arm across your chest as this can make your shoulder and chest stiff. Instead, you should sit like the picture below.



Start by elevating for 10-20 minutes every hour. It is important to move your elbow and shoulder regularly to stop them from becoming stiff. The amount of time you need to elevate differs in every case and can be adjusted accordingly.

Active movement can help to push swelling away. You can help this process by making a fist regularly while your hand is elevated.



- **Exercises**

Start exercising your fingers as soon as your cast is applied. It might feel uncomfortable to do these exercises, but they should become easier. Please contact the Plaster Room if your cast prevents you from making a fist.

Exercises should be done little and often as this helps increase movement and reduce swelling.

Fingers

To begin:

1) Stretch your fingers up straight .



2) Then, bend from your knuckles and keep the rest of your joints straight.



- 3) Next, bend from your knuckles and then bend the next joint up. Keep the last joint straight.



- 4) Once you have done this, straighten your fingers, then bend your middle and last finger joints.



- 5) Finally, bend all your finger joints to make a fist.



Thumb

Touch the thumb to the tip of each finger in turn. Try to make an 'O' shape.



Try to use your hand normally for light activities e.g., brushing hair, dressing, buttons, zips, feeding yourself - use your good hand to help if necessary. Try not to ignore your injured hand. **Do not get your cast wet.**

While wearing a cast, seek medical attention if:

- You experience increased pain, swelling, pins and needles or numbness in your affected arm that is not relieved by basic pain medication and raising your arm.
- The cast breaks, is too tight or becomes loose.
- The cast prevents you from making a fist.

What to expect when your cast is removed

Casts are regularly removed without a repeat x-ray.

Once your cast is removed, it is normal for your hand and wrist to feel stiff and weak. Encourage your hand to join in with light activities. Strength is always the last thing to return; this will improve as your movement increases.

Hand Therapy

After this injury, it is not necessary to be routinely referred to Hand Therapy. Your doctor will decide if this will be required.

Summary

Do:

- ✓ Keep your hand raised above your elbow as much as possible.
- ✓ Make a fist regularly - the plaster should not stop you from making a fist.
- ✓ Use your affected hand for light, pain-free activities.

Do not:

- ✗ Lift heavy items.
- ✗ Get your cast wet.
- ✗ Drive.

Contact details

If you have any questions, please telephone the Hand Therapy team or the Plaster Room on:

- 01623 622515, extension 3221 – Hand Therapy
- 01623 622515, extension 4114 – Plaster Room.

Please note this leaflet and video are only for use by patients under the care of Sherwood Forest Hospitals who have broken their wrist and have been told to use these by a Sherwood Forest Hospitals healthcare professional.

Further sources of information

NHS Choices: www.nhs.uk/conditions

Our website: www.sfh-tr.nhs.uk

Patient Experience Team (PET)

PET is available to help with any of your compliments, concerns, or complaints, and will ensure a prompt and efficient service.

King's Mill Hospital: 01623 672222

Newark Hospital: 01636 685692

Email: sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net

If you would like this information in an alternative format, for example large print or easy read, or if you need help with communicating with us, for example because you use British Sign Language, please let us know. You can call the Patient Experience Team on 01623 672222 or email sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net.

This document is intended for information purposes only and should not replace advice that your relevant health professional would give you. External websites may be referred to in specific cases. Any external websites are provided for your information and convenience. We cannot accept responsibility for the information found on them. If you require a full list of references (if relevant) for this leaflet, please email sfh-tr.patientinformation@nhs.net or telephone 01623 622515, extension 6927.

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