

Department of hand therapy

# Fractured wrist – after removing your dressings

## Information for patients

### Introduction

This leaflet provides advice and exercises to do now you have had your dressings removed and you can start moving your wrist. If you have any questions about the information below please speak to the hand therapy team on 020 3311 0333.

### What you can and can't do with your hand

You can start to move your wrist and use your hand for light activities such as washing and dressing. At first you should expect your wrist to feel stiff and painful. This is normal after surgery and will slowly improve with time.

You should avoid using your hand for heavy lifting or putting body weight onto your hand for two to three months after surgery. Your hand therapist will discuss when it is appropriate to start heavy lifting, etc.

### Pain and swelling

Pain and swelling within your wrist and hand is normal at this stage. Raising your hand above heart level and performing the exercises in this leaflet will help. Your hand therapist may also provide you with a compression glove and discuss other techniques for managing this.

Basic painkillers such as paracetamol may help reduce pain, but if you do not find this effective we recommend contacting your GP for advice.

### Splint

You were given a removable splint when your dressings were removed. You should wear this at all times except when completing your exercises and when washing. Your hand therapist will also advise you on when it will be possible to start removing your splint for light activities.

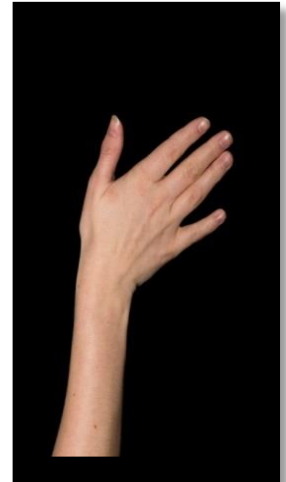
### Scar management

Your hand therapist will teach you how to massage your scar to improve the flexibility, colour and feeling of your scar. You should complete this three to four times a day for five to ten minutes using a water-based cream, such as Nivea, E45 or aqueous cream.

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## Exercises

It is important to start exercises for your wrist as soon as the cast is removed. By exercising and using your hand for normal activities the feeling of stiffness and discomfort will gradually disappear. We recommend you complete the following exercises five times a day and repeat each exercise five times, but you can do more if you are able to.



Rest your elbow on a table then move your wrist forwards and backwards as far as possible.

Rest your elbow on a table. Then 'wave' or tilt your hand one way and then the other.



Position your arm into your side with your elbow bent to 90 degrees. Then turn your palm upwards as far as you can and then down towards the floor.

If you are still having problems with moving your fingers, thumb, elbow or shoulder then we recommend you also complete the following exercises:



Straighten and then bend your elbow as far as possible.



Reach your hand above your head.



Place your hand behind your head.



Place your hand behind your back.



Straighten your fingers as much as possible. You should be able to fully straighten your fingers by this time.



Bend your fingers into a fist. You should be able to make a full fist.



Start with your fingers straight, then bend the tips of your fingers, keeping the large joints straight, forming a 'hook'.



Bend your large knuckles as far as possible, keeping the rest of your fingers straight.



Touch the tip of each finger with your thumb.



Bend your thumb across your palm and then straighten your thumb.

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## What happens next?

Your doctor in the fracture clinic should refer you to the therapy department to progress your exercises and help you regain full use of your hand.

## Who do I contact for more information?

Fracture clinic appointments: 020 3312 3736 / 6778

**Hand therapy:** 020 3311 0333

**Email:** Therapies.Outpatients@imperial.nhs.uk

## How do I make a comment about my visit?

We aim to provide the best possible service and staff will be happy to answer any of the questions you may have. If you have any **suggestions** or **comments** about your visit, please either speak to a member of staff or contact the patient advice and liaison service (**PALS**) on **020 3313 0088** (Charing Cross, Hammersmith and Queen Charlotte's & Chelsea hospitals), or **020 3312 7777** (St Mary's and Western Eye hospitals). You can also email PALS at **imperial.pals@nhs.net**. The PALS team will listen to your concerns, suggestions or queries and is often able to help solve problems on your behalf.

Alternatively, you may wish to express your concerns in **writing** to:

Complaints department  
Fourth floor  
Salton House  
St Mary's Hospital  
Praed Street  
London W2 1NY

## Alternative formats

This leaflet can be provided on request in large print or easy read, as a sound recording, in Braille, or in alternative languages. Please email the communications team:  
**imperial.patient.information@nhs.net**

## Wi-fi

We have a free wi-fi service for basic filtered browsing and a premium wi-fi service (requiring payment) at each of our five hospitals. Look for WiFiSPARK\_FREE or WiFiSPARK\_PREMIUM