

Fractured Distal Radius Operative Management - Plating

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Introduction

This leaflet will give you and your family advice following the operation to repair your broken wrist.

The radius is the larger of the two bones of the forearm. The end toward the wrist is called the distal end. A fracture of the distal radius occurs when the area of the radius near the wrist breaks (Figure 1)



Figure 1: Wrist bones

Breaking the wrist bones is very common. The break usually happens when you fall and reach out your hands. It can also happen in a car, bike or skiing accident, or when playing sport (Figure 2).



Figure 2: X-ray of wrist

Operation

The bones are lined up, and then a metal plate and some screws are used to keep the bones in place. You will be in a plaster splint for around 2-4 weeks.

Advice after your operation

- Take regular pain medication.

- **Elevate the arm.** Keep your arm up for at least 2-3 days or until the swelling goes down.
- Keep your hand up higher than your elbow.
- You can do this using the sling when walking.
- Or keep your hand and forearm up on pillows when sitting or in bed.
- You can use your hand for light activities but avoid any heavy lifting for 8 weeks.

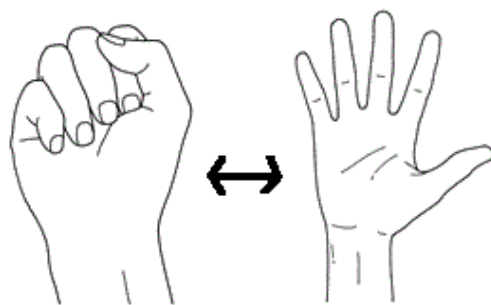
Looking after your plaster

- Always keep your plaster cast dry.
- If your arm becomes swollen this may cause your hand to become discoloured or numb. If this happens put your arm up and do the hand exercises in the leaflet. If there is no improvement you should go to your nearest hospital.
- If your plaster becomes soft, broken, wet or damaged in any way, go to your nearest hospital.
- If your plaster cast is uncomfortable do not alter it yourself, go to your nearest hospital to have it checked.
- Do not push any objects down inside your cast as this can cause a skin infection.

Exercises

After the plaster cast is put on you must exercise your fingers, thumb, elbow and shoulder. It is very important to exercise your fingers and thumb as the joints in your hand stiffen very quickly. This may be a little sore at first but should get better with practice. You will not do any damage by doing these exercises. Exercise at least five times every day.

1.



Make a fist (thumb over fingers) then straighten your fingers.

Hold straight for 10 seconds.

Repeat 10 times

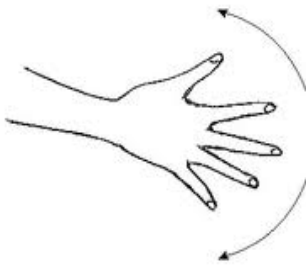
2.



Place your thumb against each fingertip in turn.

Repeat 10 times

3.



Place your hand on a table.

Open your fingers wide, then bring them back together.

Repeat 10 times

4.



In sitting or standing

Bend and straighten your elbow.

Repeat 5 times

5.



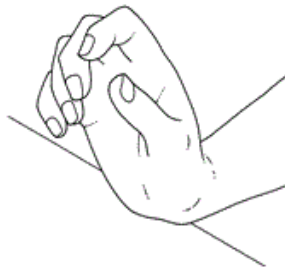
Reach your arm above your head, then bring it back to your side.

Repeat 5 times

Follow-up

- You will have a clinic appointment 2-4 weeks after your operation.
- Your cast will be removed and you can start to move your wrist. **Start by doing the exercises below.**
- A physiotherapy treatment referral will be sent to the hospital nearest your home.
- If you still have problems with your hand and wrist after two weeks of these exercises please phone the Musculoskeletal Physiotherapy Referral Centre number below to arrange an appointment.

6.



Bend and straighten your wrist.

You can do this over the edge of a table.

Repeat 10 times

7.



Forearm on a table, palm turned up.

Alternatively turn palm up and down, keeping elbow still.

Repeat 10 times

Please speak to any member of staff if you have any questions or concerns.

If you are worried or require further information about your physiotherapy advice, please contact:

Senior Orthopaedic Physiotherapist on 01592 729775

Following the removal of your cast/splint you should start the exercising of the wrist. Do the exercises above.