

PATIENT GUIDE: Wrist ORIF for Distal Radius Fracture

Swelling Management

- It is normal to have swelling after your surgery.
- Movement of your wrist and hand helps with swelling.
- Keep your arm raised above the level of your heart when resting in the first few weeks after surgery.
- Do not hang your arm down by your side for long periods



Wound and Scar Management

- A light dressing will be put on your hand. Keep the dressing **clean** and **dry**.
- Once your wound is fully healed your hand therapist will advise on how to massage and moisturise your scar.
- Once your wound has fully healed keep your hand clean by washing it in running cool water, do not soak your hand. Pat dry with a clean towel or kitchen roll.
- If your wrist/hand becomes red, or you have increased pain or discharge from your wound please contact the hand therapy team or A&E immediately.

Splint

- You will be provided with a wrist splint that will either be soft or hard material to protect your wrist.
- Wear the splint at all times except for hand hygiene and for the exercises given by your hand therapist.
- The splint will be worn for around 4-6 weeks.
- You must not drive with the splint on.
- Your hand can be used for light use and the exercises given by the hand therapist, but no heavy lifting

Care of your splint

- ✓ Wash with soap and lukewarm water and rinse.
- ✓ Baby wipes can be used to clean and freshen the splint.

DO NOT:

- Leave in sunlight, near direct heat or a naked flame.
- Place in hot water
- Adjust the splint yourself.

EXERCISES: from five days to four weeks post operation

It is normal to feel a stretch and/or discomfort when doing the exercises but they should not be painful. Please perform the exercises every two hours, with 5-10 repetitions of each one. This is only a guideline and can be varied depending on your level of pain and stiffness.



With your forearm supported on a table.

Move the wrist towards your thumb and then towards your little finger



With your forearm supported on a table.

Lift your wrist up and down, do some with your fingers straight and some with your fingers bent.



With your forearm supported on a table and elbow tucked into your side.

Turn your palm up and down keeping your elbow still.

Exercises from five days to four weeks post operation, continued:

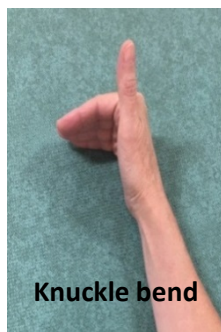
Please perform the exercises below every 2-3 hours, with 5-10 repetitions of each one.

This is only a guideline and can be varied depending on your level of pain and stiffness.

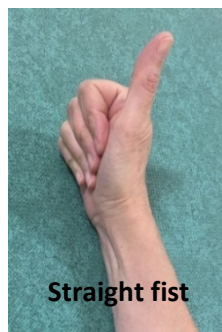
Tendon Gliding Exercises: after each bending exercise always straighten your fingers fully.



Straight



Knuckle bend



Straight fist



Hook fist

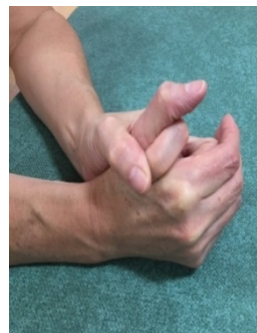


Full fist

Thumb exercises:



With the tip of the thumb touch each fingertip.



Hold your thumb under the top joint.

Gently bend and straighten the top joint of your thumb.



Move your thumb across your palm to touch the base of the little finger.



Place the palm of your hand on a table.

Move your thumb away from your index finger and back in again.

Exercises from four to six weeks post operation

Please perform the exercises below 3 times a day, hold each position for between 10-20 seconds, repeat 3 times.

This is only a guideline and can be varied depending on your level of pain and stiffness.



With your forearm supported on a table lift your wrist up and gently apply pressure to the palm with your other hand to increase the movement.

Move your wrist down and gently apply pressure to the back of the hand with your other hand to increase the movement.



With your forearm supported on a table and elbow tucked into your side.

Turn your palm up and apply pressure to your arm to increase the movement keeping your elbow still.

From six to twelve weeks post operation

You will be able to wean off using your splint and start using your hand and wrist for most normal activities. You can normally return to driving after 6 weeks depending on whether you have enough strength and movement in your wrist to drive safely.

- Continue to work on your exercises and scar massage to improve your movement.
- You will need to gradually build up the strength in your wrist and hand, your hand therapist will be able to show you how to do this.
- You should avoid very heavy loading and lifting or contact sports (such as rugby) until 12 weeks after your surgery.
- You may see continued improvements in your wrist function up until a year after your operation.

Contact us if you experience a rash, redness, rubbing or irritation of your skin, increase in pain or pins and needles or numbness, large amounts of swelling or sweating, if your splint breaks or feels too tight or loose. Tel: **01423 - 553404** or **01423 - 553460**