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Contact details

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Physiotherapy following a Distal Radius Fracture

Physiotherapy

What is a distal radius fracture?

This is a fracture of one of the bones in your forearm close to the wrist. It is usually caused by falling on an outstretched hand.

How is it treated?

Your wrist may or may not need to be manipulated back into the correct position. It is then normally put in a plaster cast for four to six weeks.

Your fracture may need to be held in place with pins or plates.

When the plaster is on it is important to keep your shoulder, elbow and fingers moving.

What should I expect after my plaster is taken off?

It is normal to have some pain and discomfort. Some simple analgesia may be beneficial.

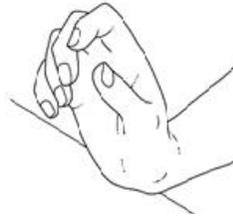
You are likely to have swelling and stiffness.

Because you haven't used your wrist normally whilst in the plaster it is normal to expect some weakness. Avoid lifting heavy objects for around four weeks.

Exercising and using your hand normally will help to gradually reduce these symptoms.

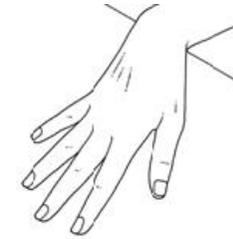
Moisturising with cream may help to soften any dry, flaky skin and desensitise any surgical scars.

Exercises



Forearm supported on a table with your hand relaxed over the edge and palm facing down.

Lift the wrist and return to starting position.



Forearm supported on a table with your hand relaxed over the edge and palm facing down. Straighten your fingers and bend wrist down.



Hold your wrist and fingers straight. Move your wrist in the direction of your little finger and then in the direction of your thumb.



Forearm on a table, palm turned down. Alternately turn palm over and return to starting position keeping your elbow still.



With your thumb touch the tip of each finger

Frequently asked questions

Do I need another X-ray?

X-rays are not usually done after your plaster is removed if the clinician is happy with your progress.

Should I stop exercises if my wrist swells or aches?

It is normal for some pain and swelling for up to a year after your fracture. Try using some pain relief or anti-inflammatories to aid continued exercises and function.

How do I increase my wrist/hand function?

Day to day activities such as washing up or writing can be helpful in regaining your previous level of function.

When can I start driving?

When you can grip the steering wheel and change gear safely. This will vary between individuals. Please check with your insurance company before commencing driving.