

# Wrist Fracture

## **What is a wrist fracture?**

Your wrist is made up of eight bones. They attach to the bones in your forearm and the bones in your hand. A fracture is a break in a bone. When you break your wrist, you may have broken the ends of the forearm bones (radius or ulna) or one of the eight wrist bones.

## **How does it occur?**

The usual causes of a wrist fracture are:

- ▶ a fall
- ▶ a direct blow to the wrist.

## **What are the symptoms?**

Your wrist is painful and swollen. When the navicular bone is fractured, the area below the thumb is tender.

## **How is it diagnosed?**

Your health care provider will examine your wrist and review your symptoms. An x-ray of your wrist may show a fracture. Sometimes a fracture may not show up in the first x-ray and your health care provider may recommend that you have a repeat x-ray in 1 to 2 weeks.

## **How is it treated?**

If the broken bone is crooked, your health care provider will straighten it. Your provider will give you medicine first so the straightening is not too painful.

You may be given a splint for your wrist for a few days until the swelling begins to go down. Then your wrist will be put in a cast for 4 to 8 weeks. Certain types of fractures may need to be in a cast longer and may eventually need surgery.

Your health care provider may prescribe anti-inflammatory medications or other pain medications.

You should elevate your wrist on a pillow or the back of a chair as often as possible for the first 2 to 3 days. This will help control pain and swelling.

You may place ice packs over the cast for 20 to 30 minutes every 3 to 4 hours for the first 2 to 3 days. Take care not to get your cast wet if it is a plaster cast.

## **When should I call my health care provider?**

Call your health care provider if:

- ▶ Your pain is getting worse instead of better.
- ▶ You feel that your cast is too tight and you have swelling that doesn't get better when you elevate your injury.

## **How can I prevent a wrist fracture?**

Most wrist fractures are caused by accidents that you cannot easily prevent. However, when you do activities such as rollerblading, be sure to wear protective wrist guards.

# Wrist Fracture Rehabilitation Exercises

The first 5 exercises are stretching exercises.

You may do these when the sharp wrist pain goes away.

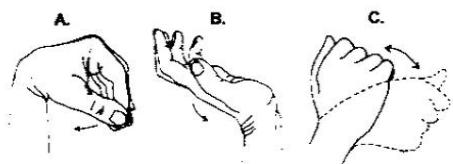
The last 3 exercises are strengthening exercises.

You may do these exercises when stretching is nearly painless.

## Stretching exercises

### 1. WRIST: ACTIVE RANGE OF MOTION

- A. **FLEXION:** Gently bend your wrist forward. Hold for 5 seconds. Do 3 sets of 10.
- B. **EXTENSION:** Gently bend your wrist backward. Hold this position 5 seconds. Do 3 sets of 10.
- C. **SIDE TO SIDE:** Gently move your wrist from side to side (a handshake motion). Hold for 5 seconds at each end. Do 3 sets of 10.

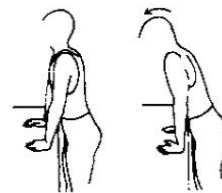


2. **WRIST STRETCH:** With your uninjured hand, help to bend the injured wrist down by pressing the back of your hand and holding it down for 15 to 30 seconds. Next, stretch the hand back by pressing the fingers in a backward direction and holding it for 15 to 30 seconds. Do 3 sets.



### 3. WRIST EXTENSION STRETCH:

Stand at a table with your palms down, fingers flat, and elbows straight. Lean your body weight forward. Hold this position for 15 seconds. Repeat 3 times.



4. **WRIST FLEXION STRETCH:** Stand with the back of your hands on a table, palms facing up, fingers pointing toward your body, and elbows straight. Lean away from the table. Hold this position for 15 to 30 seconds. Repeat 3 times.



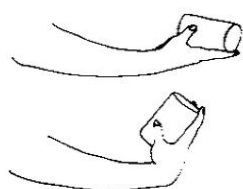
### 5. PRONATION AND SUPINATION OF THE FOREARM:

With your elbow bent 90°, turn your palm upward and hold for 5 seconds. Slowly turn your palm downward and hold for 5 seconds. Make sure you keep your elbow at your side and bent 90° throughout this exercise. Do 3 sets of 10.

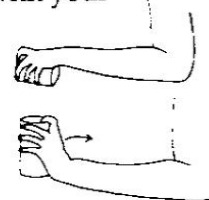


## Strengthening exercises

6. **WRIST FLEXION EXERCISE:** Hold a can or hammer handle in your hand with your palm facing up. Bend your wrist upward. Slowly lower the weight and return to the starting position. Do 3 sets of 10. Gradually increase the weight of the can or weight you are holding.



7. **WRIST EXTENSION EXERCISE:** Hold a soup can or hammer handle in your hand with your palm facing down. Slowly bend your wrist upward. Slowly lower the weight down into the starting position. Do 3 sets of 10. Gradually increase the weight of the object you are holding.



8. **GRIP STRENGTHENING:** Squeeze a rubber ball and hold for 5 seconds. Do 3 sets of 10.