

## Therapies Department

# Helping your wrist recover after cast or splint removal

October 2021

*Great Staff – Great Care – Great Future*

---

### **Introduction**

This leaflet has been produced to give you general information. Most of your questions should be answered by this leaflet. It is not intended to replace the discussion between you and the healthcare team, but may act as a starting point for discussion. If after reading it you have any concerns or require further explanation, please discuss this with a member of the healthcare team.

### **Caring for your skin**

Skin often becomes very dry and flaky under a plaster cast or splint. Once removed it is advisable to wash and moisturise the area. This process can be repeated daily until the skin returns to normal. If you have a wound, please check that you are able to get this wet. If you have a scar from surgery, firmly massage the area with moisturiser for a few minutes every day, to ensure a mobile, well-healed scar.

### **Pain**

Now the cast or splint has been removed, it is common to experience pain. This is entirely normal but should reduce as the joint flexibility improves. Your doctor can prescribe you pain relief medication, and taking these regularly, as advised can address the pain. If your pain becomes severe or constant and heavily limits your movement post cast removal, not easing or responding to pain relief after 2-week period please contact your doctor or physiotherapist for advice.

### **Swelling**

You may notice some swelling, but in the 2-week post cast removal you should notice this reducing and movement should improve, you should be able to make a full fist at this point. To manage swelling it is advised to elevate your arm when resting. This can be done by placing it on two pillows on your chair arm. While in this position clench and open your hand frequently. Regular exercising of your affected limb together with elevation of the affected arm when resting can help reduce swelling.

## Using your hand and wrist

Once your cast or splint is removed it is important to start using your hand and wrist as normally as you can. Begin with light functional activities like fastening buttons, washing, eating and turning the pages of books and magazines. Gradually progress to heavier activities like lifting and pouring the kettle and carrying shopping bags as your symptoms and pain allows.

You may have been provided with a wrist support to wear when your cast was removed. Unless you have been advised otherwise, wear the support to allow you to use your hand during more strenuous tasks like housework. It can be removed for lighter activities, to perform your exercises and while resting. Gradually wean out of the splint after a few weeks.

## Exercises

It is recommended that you exercise your wrist as soon as you can after your cast or splint has been removed. As you start to exercise and regain normal movement in the wrist, the feeling of stiffness, pain and swelling will gradually reduce. Wrist exercises are most effective if practiced regularly and not just once per day. You should try to perform the following exercises 3 to 4 times every day.



### 1. Wrist flexion and extension

Rest your arm over the edge of a table or chair arm. Gently move your wrist up and down. Repeat 10-15 times.



### 2. Radial/ulnar deviation

Allow your arm to rest on a flat surface. Without moving your forearm, slide your hand to one side and then the other. Repeat 10-15 times.



### 3. Make a fist

Without moving your wrist, curl your fingers to form a fist and then straighten your hand and fingers. Repeat 10-15 times



### 4. Thumb opposition

Touch your thumb to the tip of each of your fingers and then to the base of your little finger. Repeat 10-15 times



### 5. Pronation / supination

Bend your elbow and tuck it in against your side. Now turn the palm of your hand upwards (facing the ceiling) and then downwards (towards the floor). Repeat 10-15 times.



### 6. Elbow flexion / extension

Bend your elbow up towards you as far as possible. Now slowly straighten it out as far as you are able. Repeat 10-15 times



### 7. Active shoulder flexion

Sit comfortably in a chair and slowly raise your arms above your head as high as you can and slowly lower. Repeat 10-15 times

## Lifting

Avoid lifting heavy objects or containers of hot liquid until you feel confident your hand and wrist feel strong enough to do so.

Using your hand as normally as possible is the most important thing you can do to improve your function and strength. Initially, this is likely to be difficult, but persevere with it and it should get easier.

## Physiotherapy

If symptoms persist post cast removal despite regular exercise as recommended above, you can self-refer to physiotherapy.

Hull GP patients: **(01482) 300003**

East riding GP patients: self-refer at [www.chcpmsk.org.uk](http://www.chcpmsk.org.uk) or telephone **(01377) 20830**

Children and Young Adults under the age of 18 should call fracture clinic on **(01482) 674378 or (01482) 674909** where an appropriate plan can be made.

If you have an urgent query regarding your symptoms, following the removal of your cast, please telephone fracture clinic on **(01482) 674909 or (01482) 674378**

## Information about you

We collect and use your information to provide you with care and treatment. As part of your care, your information will be shared between members of the healthcare team, some of whom you may not meet. Your information may also be used to help train staff, to check the quality of our care, to manage and plan the health service and to help with research. Wherever possible we use anonymous data.

We may pass on relevant information to other health or social organisations that provide you with care. All information is treated as strictly confidential and is not given to anyone who does not need it. If you have any concerns please ask your doctor, or the person caring for you.

Under the General Data Protection Regulation and the Data Protection Act 2018 we are responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of any information we hold about you. For further information visit the following page: [Confidential Information about You. www.hey.nhs.uk/privacy/data-protection](http://www.hey.nhs.uk/privacy/data-protection)

If you or your carer needs information about your health and wellbeing and about your care and treatment in a different format, such as large print, braille or audio, due to disability, impairment or sensory loss, please advise a member of staff and this can be arranged.

This leaflet was produced by the Physiotherapy Department, Hull University Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust and will be reviewed in **October 2024**.

**Ref: HEY1259/2021**