Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh Teaching Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Suspected Scaphoid Fracture

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Suspected Scaphoid Fracture

Patient Information

Virtual Fracture Clinic / Fracture Clinic

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What has happened?

You have suffered an injury to your hand / wrist. When you were examined in the Emergency Department (ED) or Urgent Treatment Centre (UTC), you had tenderness over a small bone in the wrist called the scaphoid. However, there was no clear fracture visible on the X-rays taken at the time. This is often the case with scaphoid injuries.

You will have been provided with a wrist splint, or, in some cases a back slab (temporary cast). Your case will then be referred to the Virtual Fracture Clinic (VFC) for review by the specialist Orthopaedic Team. You will be contacted by the VFC Team to discuss the outcome of this review. You may be offered a face-to-face review appointment in the Suspected Scaphoid Fracture Clinic.

What is the scaphoid?

The scaphoid is a small bone in your wrist.

These X-ray images show a fracture to the scaphoid bone in someone’s right wrist.

A scaphoid fracture is usually caused by a sudden force through the hand / wrist, for example, landing on your hand during a trip or fall.

It has an unusual blood supply, and as a result, can struggle to heal if a fracture is left untreated.



What happens now?

Having an X-ray taken is usually normal, however we may invite you to attend a follow up appointment in the Suspected Scaphoid Fracture clinic, in the main Fracture Clinic Department, around 2 weeks after your injury, for further assessment.

This will allow us to identify and treat a scaphoid fracture quickly, but also to reassure you as soon as possible if your scaphoid is not broken.

Whilst waiting to attend your appointment, you should continue to rest, wearing your wrist splint day and night, and removing it only for hygiene and checking your skin for any signs that the splint is rubbing.

Safe exercises

It is safe to practice these exercises in the splint straight away. This will help to manage swelling and maintain the movement in the fingers and thumb.

Practice bending your fingers to make a gentle fist and then straightening them.




Splaying your fingers out and in.




Moving your thumb across to touch the tip of each finger.






If your hand or wrist is swollen, raise the hand and arm on a pillow higher than your heart level when practicing these exercises.

Practice 5 to 10 repetitions of each exercise 3 times a day, or as comfort allows.

What happens at the appointment?

During your assessment in the Suspected Scaphoid Fracture Clinic, if the clinician finds that your scaphoid remains tender, you will be offered a same day Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) scan. The scan is performed in the X-ray department at the Wigan Royal Albert Edward Infirmary. The scan is usually offered in the early afternoon and takes about 15 minutes.

Please be aware that there may be a couple of hours to wait from your appointment time to your MRI scan. Please ensure you make suitable travel and parking arrangements and inform work / school as necessary.

If there is any reason you feel you may not be able to stay for an MRI scan, please advise your clinician during your appointment, so that a suitable alternative can be discussed.

Important

It is useful to know that 25% of these injuries resolve fully in the first 2 weeks. If you feel you no longer need to attend the appointment, please inform us by calling 0300 707 2103

If you are still experiencing any pain / discomfort in the wrist or hand, we strongly advise that you attend your appointment. If left untreated, some scaphoid fractures can lead to osteoarthritis, reduced movement and poor grip strength. This may eventually lead to bone collapse, causing pain and a significant impact on movement and function. This is very difficult to treat in the long term.

What happens after the MRI scan?

Once you have had your scan, you can re-apply your splint and go home.

The clinician will contact you by phone with your results, once the Consultant Radiologist has made their report. Please be aware this may take up to 72 hours.

What if I have a scaphoid fracture?

If you have a confirmed scaphoid tubercle fracture:

- The tubercle is the very tip of the scaphoid. The blood supply here is good and therefore these fractures usually heal well
- They are managed in a splint for approximately 6 weeks

If you have a confirmed scaphoid waist fracture:

- The waist is across the middle of the scaphoid bone. The blood supply here is moderate; therefore, these injuries are kept in a cast to help them heal

If you have a confirmed scaphoid proximal pole fracture:

- The proximal pole is the part of the scaphoid that has a poor blood supply and will not heal well if left in a splint or a cast. In this instance, you will be seen by a Consultant Hand Surgeon to discuss management options
- Please be reassured that this type of scaphoid injury is very rare

Most of the time, the MRI scan will show soft tissue injury, bone bruising or a small break in another bone nearby. These injuries do not usually need follow up because they heal without any problems.

During your follow up phone call with the clinician, your injury type and treatment plan will be discussed in more detail.



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