Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh Teaching Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Removal of a Cast / Splint Following a Hand or Wrist Injury

Version number: **3**
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Removal of Cast / Splint Following a Hand or Wrist Injury

Patient Information

Physiotherapy Department

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Not all exercises are suitable for everyone, and while every precaution was taken in selecting these exercises, they do not come without risks. If you have any concerns regarding your injury, or whether you should partake in the exercises, then you should consult your General Practitioner (GP) or therapist before starting any exercises shown in this leaflet.

It is quite normal to feel some discomfort following exercise, but it is important that this discomfort eases within 2 hours of finishing the exercise and does not have an overall negative effect on your symptoms.

The exercise plans shown in this leaflet are designed to be used as a guide and a point of reference; they can be modified and progressed under the supervision of your therapist.

If you have been referred for ongoing physiotherapy from this point, please consult your therapist if you have any concerns:

Fracture Clinic Physiotherapy Team: 01942 822103

Wrightington Hand Therapy Team: 01257 488272

Boston House Health Centre Physiotherapy Department: 03007071113

Leigh Infirmary Physiotherapy Department: 03007071597

Platt Bridge Health Centre Physiotherapy Department: 03007071772

If you do not have any further follow-up and you have any concerns, please contact:

Fracture Clinic Physiotherapy Team: 01942 822103

Fracture Clinic Nursing Team: 01942 822109

If you have any urgent concerns out of hours, please call 111.

Advice

It is usual to experience some swelling, discomfort and stiffness following the removal of a cast / splint.

Swelling

You can try the following to help to reduce swelling of the wrist and hand:

Elevation

Raise the hand and arm on a pillow higher than your heart level. In this position, bend and straighten your fingers and spread your fingers apart and bring them back together.







Contrast bathing

Fill a bowl with warm water and another with cold water. Soak your hand in the warm water, bend and straighten your fingers 5 times, and then soak your hand in the cold water, bend and straighten your fingers 5 times. Repeat the sequence 5 times and then finish with one final go in the warm water. Take extra care if you have reduced sensation in your hand. Test the temperature of the water first with your unaffected hand.

Pain

You should expect some degree of discomfort. Pain relieving medication should help to ease this. Ask the pharmacist in your local chemist if you need advice.

Using ice or heat can help to reduce pain:

Ice

Place a damp tea towel over the painful area. Place an ice pack or a bag of frozen peas on top of the towel for 10 minutes.

Heat

Place a microwaveable wheat bag or a hot water bottle wrapped in a towel over the painful area for 15-20 minutes.

Check your skin regularly during treatment with ice or heat to prevent a skin burn. Take extra care if you have any reduced sensation in your hand or wrist.

Activity

Try to use your hand and wrist as normally as you can, and encourage your hand to ‘join in’ with activities. Start with light activities such as washing, dressing, fastening buttons, making a sandwich and eating. Initially, avoid more demanding activities, for example lifting a full kettle, changing bedding, lifting trays out of the oven. You can gradually progress to heavier activities as your symptoms allow and as your wrist becomes stronger.

You can drive when you are certain you have sufficient strength and control to do so safely.

Avoid heavy lifting and ball / contact sports as advised by your therapist.

Range of Movement Exercises

It is very important that you do regular exercises to regain your range of movement and improve your function.

Finger Exercises

Bend your fingers towards your palm and then straighten them.
Complete 10 repetitions, every 1-2 hours.





Thumb Exercises

Starting with the index finger, touch the tip of each finger with your thumb. When you can reach the tip of your little finger, slide your thumb down the finger.

Complete 10 repetitions, every 1-2 hours.







Wrist Exercises

1. Place your wrist over the edge of the table / arm of a chair. Lift your wrist up and then bend it down, keeping your fingers relaxed.

Complete 10 repetitions, every 1-2 hours.





2. Place your forearm on a table. Keeping the palm of your hand on the table, lift your elbow off the table.

Complete 10 repetitions, every 1-2 hours.





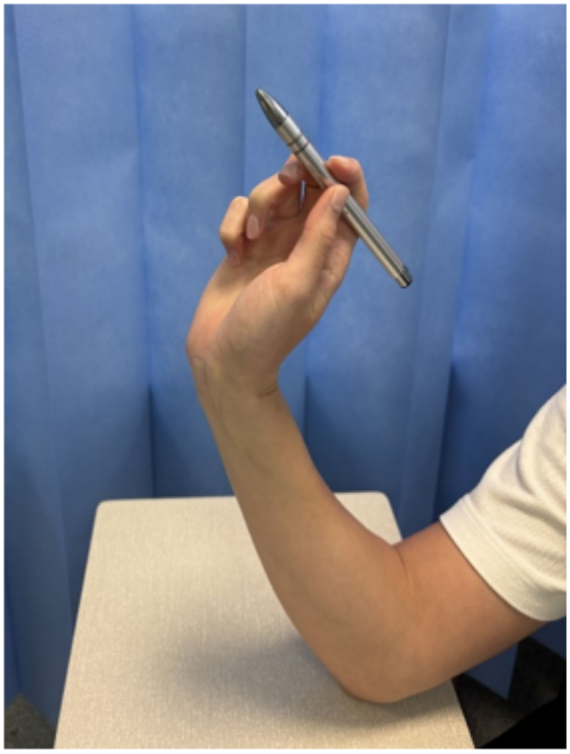
3. Keeping your elbow by your side, turn your palm to face upwards and then turn your palm to face downwards.

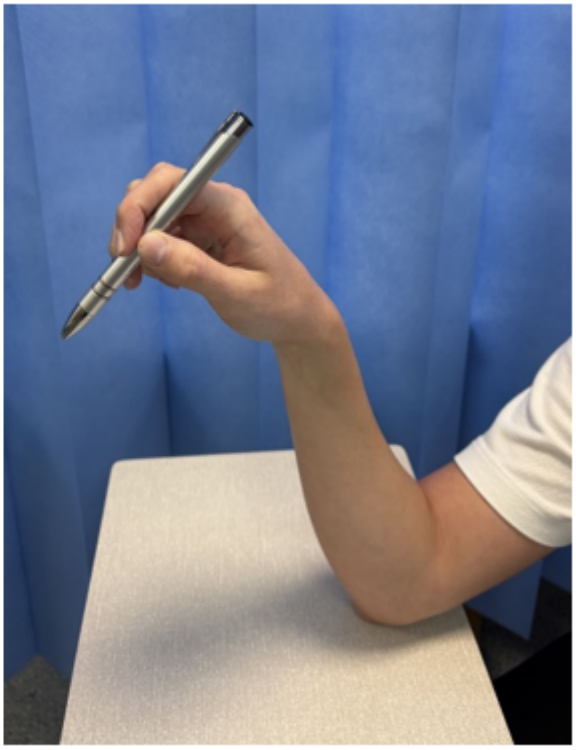
Complete 10 repetitions, every 1-2 hours.





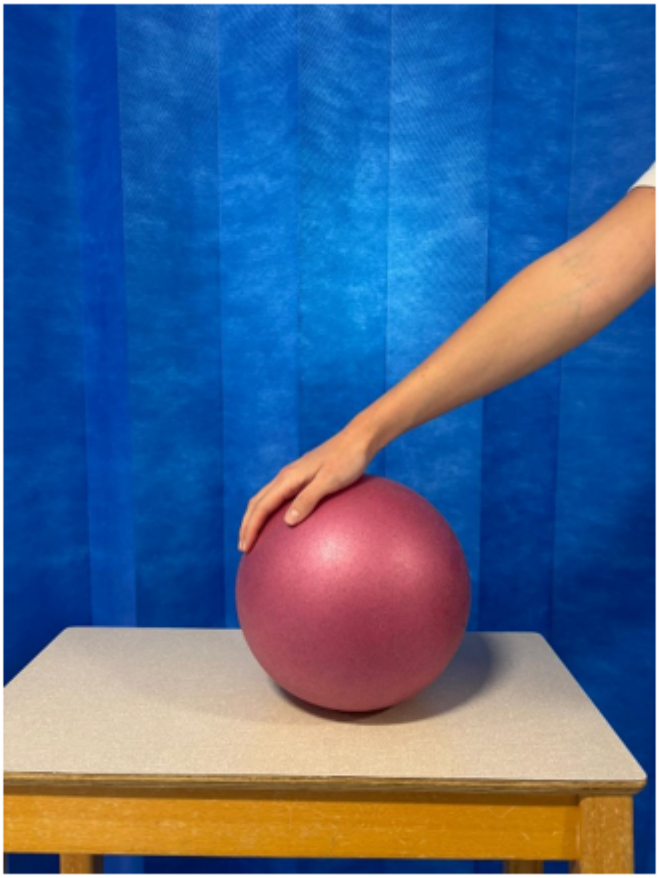
4. Hold a pen in your hand as if you were going to ‘throw a dart’. Slowly bend your wrist backwards and towards your thumb and then slowly move your wrist diagonally forwards and towards your little finger.





5. Place your hand on the top of a ball and slowly roll it forwards and backwards.







Strengthening Exercises

As you start to progress your activities, you may find that your wrist feels weak. Below are some examples of some exercises that the therapist may advise you to complete to improve your grip and wrist strength.

Prior to injury, different people would have varying degrees of wrist strength, based on several factors including age, sex, occupation, hobbies and pre-existing wrist and hand problems.

These exercises may not be appropriate for all patients and may need to be adapted to allow for pain following injury. You may need to consult the advice of a therapist before commencing the following exercises.

Grip Strengthening

1. Grip a rolled-up towel with both hands. ‘Wring it out’ in both directions. This can also be done in warm water, by wringing the water out of the towel.

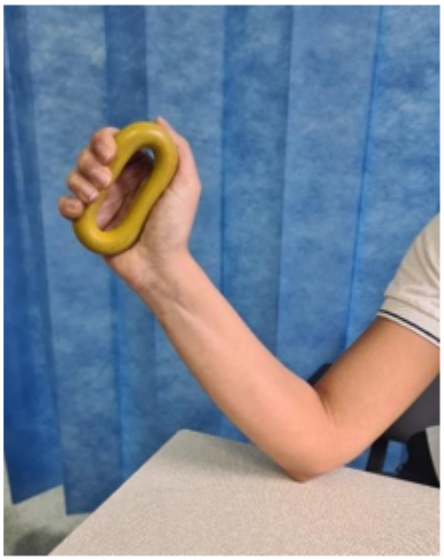


2. Squeeze a ball of putty or a sponge in the hand. Squeeze 10 times regularly throughout the day.



3. Using an appropriate piece of exercise equipment (examples below) as advised by your therapist, squeeze 10 times regularly throughout the day. Progress to squeeze something with a greater resistance as your strength increases.





Small dog ring toy





Grip strengthener

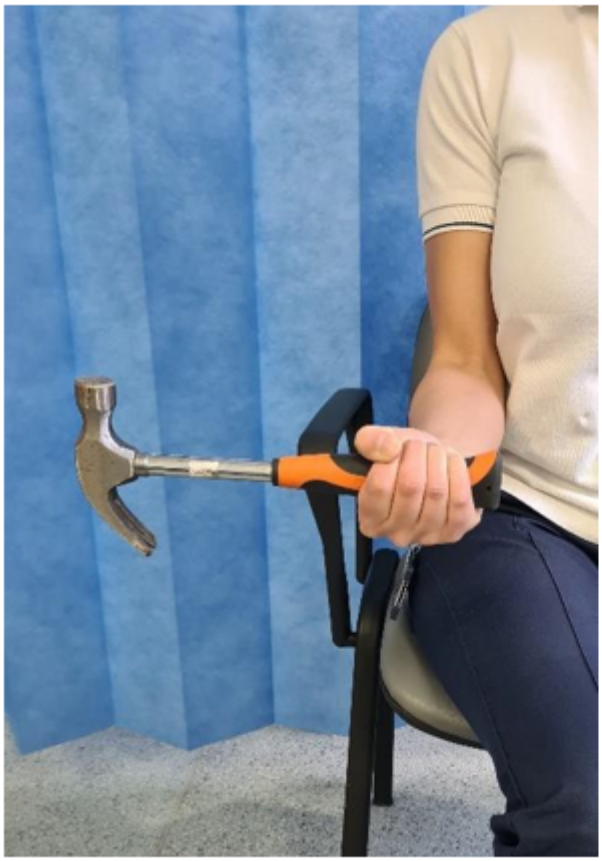
Wrist Strengthening Exercises

Place some weight in a carrier bag such as a tin of soup. Hold the carrier bag with your fingers over the edge of a table, resting your forearm on the table. Slowly lift the carrier bag by bending your wrist back, keeping your forearm on the table. Slowly lower the bag. Repeat 10 times, 3 times a day. As your strength increases, place heavier objects in the bag.





Hold an object which has a cylindrical handle and has some weight at the end, for example a hammer or a small saucepan. Keeping your elbow by your side, rotate the object to one side and then the other, slowly and controlled. Repeat 10 times, 3 times a day.





Weight Bearing

Place both hands on a wall in front with your elbows extended. If you can not bend your wrist back due to stiffness and / or pain, try placing your hands higher up the wall. Gradually transfer your weight from one hand to the other.





Go onto your hands and knees. If you cannot bend your wrist back due to stiffness and / or pain, try placing your hands further forwards or weight bear through your fist with your wrist straight. Gradually transfer your weight from one hand to the other.







Further Advice

It can take several months for you to notice a significant improvement in the range of movement and function of your wrist. By around 3 months after your injury, you should be

able to manage most everyday activities. Your wrist will continue to recover gradually, and further improvements can be expected for up to a year after the injury.



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