

Distal Radius Fracture – Conservative Management

You have fractured/ broken a bone close to the wrist known as the radius.

Information for patients

Casting

Usually for 4-6 weeks but sometimes can be more or less.

Healing times

Approximately 6 to 8 weeks for your bone to heal and another six weeks for the bone to become almost as strong as it was before. More complex injuries can take longer to heal and it can take up to 12 months for normal hand use to return.

Hand use: (see additional hand out for examples of activities)

- Week 1 - 6 after injury – light activities only with cast on and AVOID using the injured wrist
- Week 6 - 10 after injury –once cast removed, light to medium activities
- Driving: from 8+ weeks after injury when wrist movement and grip strength have improved. Your doctor can give formal advice.
- Week 10 - 12 after injury – medium to heavy activities
- Week 12 - 14 after injury – contact sports.

Common complications

- **Stiffness** can also affect the thumb and fingers, is normal once the cast is removed and can last up to 1 year and can be worse if there is a background of osteoarthritis and when it is cold.
- **Other Soft tissue injuries:** structures that are not muscle or bone around your radius tend to contract causing stiffness. Common presentations are clicking, increased swelling, weakness, and lack of movement.
- **Numbness and Pins and needles in fingers:** temporary or intermittent symptoms are normal during casting and initially once the cast is removed. These symptoms should resolve within a few weeks after cast removal – the exercises below and general hand use should help with resolving symptoms.
- **Scar tissue (under the skin):** tendon/ nerve tethering (sticking) to the scar tissue.
- **Tendon:** inflammation/ tightness.
- **Swelling:** normal body response to trauma. It can linger couple months after the injury has healed. Ways of managing it include: elevation, compression and movement

Hand therapy advice

Pain

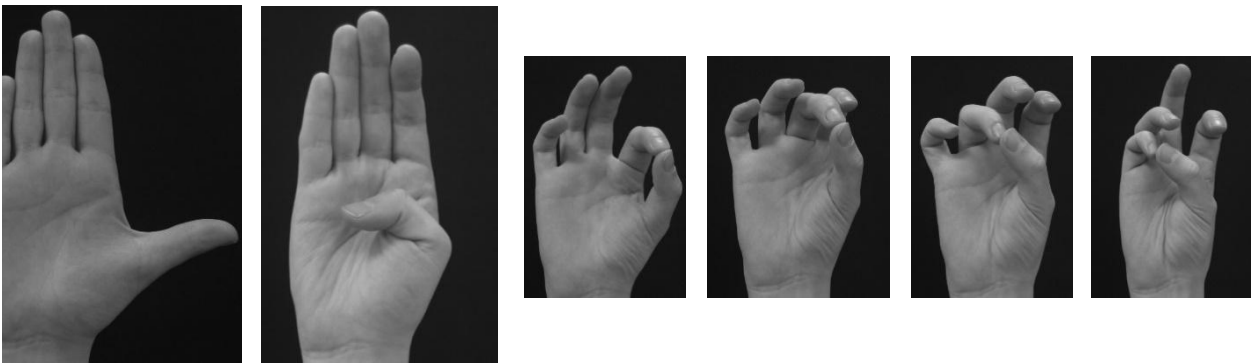
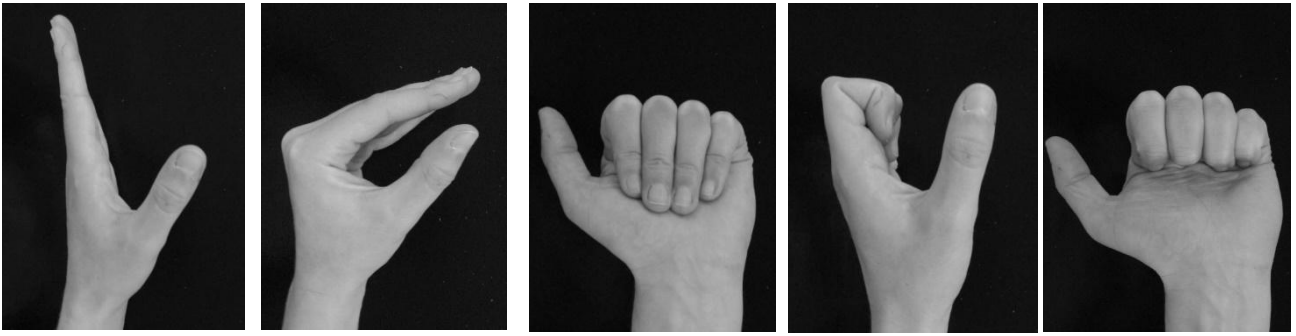
- Use over the counter painkillers regularly at the lowest dose e.g paracetamol and ibuprofen
- Heat: warm water hand baths/ hot water bottle. Heat relaxes muscles, relieves muscle and joint stiffness and achiness. Considering warming up joints before activity, making exercising easier.

Splint

Wrist support – worn intermittently up to 4-8 weeks once the cast has been removed for heavier tasks, periods of rest, not to be worn full time.

HOME EXERCISE PROGRAM GUIDELINES

Until the cast is removed - 10 repetitions, 4 - 5x/day – As guided by your hand therapist



Once cast is removed - As guided by your therapist



Approx. 2 weeks after cast is removed - As guided by your therapist



Contacting us

If you have any concerns, please contact Hand Therapy on **020 3299 8220** (Monday to Friday, 8am to 4.30pm) or on **kch-tr.therapyappts@nhs.net**.

MyChart

Our MyChart app and website lets you securely access parts of your health record with us, giving you more control over your care. To sign up or for help, call us on **020 3299 4618** or email **kings.mychart@nhs.net**. Visit **www.kch.nhs.uk/mychart** to find out more.

Sharing your information

King's College Hospital NHS Foundation Trust has partnered with Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust through the King's Health Partners Academic Health Sciences Centre. We are working together to give our patients the best possible care, so you might find we invite you for appointments at Guy's or St Thomas' hospitals. King's College Hospital and Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trusts share an electronic patient record system, which means information about your health record can be accessed safely and securely by health and care staff at both Trusts. For more information **visit www.kch.nhs.uk**.

Care provided by students

We provide clinical training where our students get practical experience by treating patients. Please tell your doctor or nurse if you do not want students to be involved in your care. Your treatment will not be affected by your decision.

PALS

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) is a service that offers support, information and assistance to patients, relatives and visitors. They can also provide help and advice if you have a concern or complaint that staff have not been able to resolve for you. They can also pass on praise or thanks to our teams.

Tel: **020 3299 4618**

Email: **kings.pals@nhs.net**

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