

# Distal Radial (Wrist) Fracture

## What has happened?

You have broken, or fractured, your wrist. This type of injury is painful, but usually heals within a few months.

A stable fracture can be managed in a splint, but unstable injuries may need a plaster cast or an operation to restore the normal bone alignment.

## What should I expect during recovery?

### Week 1

The fracture will be painful, but this pain is tolerable in the cast. There may be considerable swelling and bruising from the fingers down into the forearm. Swelling can be managed with elevation of the hand, and applying an ice pack. You should keep your shoulder and elbow as mobile as possible. Begin the hand KEY EXERCISES and try to do these around every  $\frac{1}{2}$  hour.

### Weeks 2-5

Over the weeks, the pain will start to ease, and you should start to use your hand and arm for everyday activity as pain allows. You may be asked to attend for a repeat Xray, but this is often un-necessary. If you have any problems with your plaster or splint, please contact us.

### Week 6

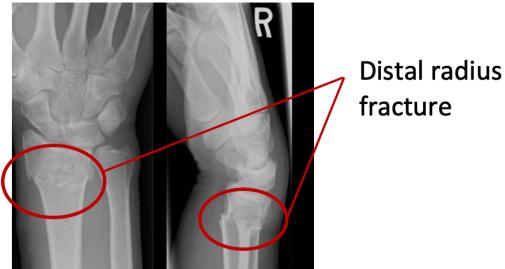
Your splint or cast should be off now. You should start the wrist KEY EXERCISES. Start to use your hand normally as soon as possible. This is quite safe, as the fracture has largely healed and most discomfort is from stiffness in the joint.

## Are there any complications of this injury?

Although the bone heals quickly, it can take up to around 6-12 months for the hand to feel normal again. The most common complication following this injury is a MALUNION, where the bone heals in a displaced position. This makes the wrist look different to how it looked before the injury, but does not usually make a big difference to function. It is possible to correct this with surgery if it is limiting function of the wrist. Other complications include persistent tingling in the fingers, loss of ability to straighten the thumb, and severe stiffness in the hand.

**You should contact us if you are worried about your progress.**

## What does the Xray look like?



## KEY EXERCISES

Hand



Wrist



## Checklist

- Week 2 - I can make a full fist
- Week 8 - I can use my hand for everyday activity
- Week 12 - I have returned to work

## TOP TIPS

**Stop smoking! This will help healing.**

**Take extra vitamin C + D for bone health**

**Go for early finger movement to avoid stiffness**

## Contact Us

Telephone : 01383 623623 extension 22441  
Email : [fife.fifehandservice@nhs.scot](mailto:fife.fifehandservice@nhs.scot)

Website : [www.fifevirtualhandclinic.co.uk](http://www.fifevirtualhandclinic.co.uk)

