

Advice for patients in a forearm cast

Hand Therapy

Patient information

You have been provided with this information sheet to give you some useful advice whilst your wrist is immobilised in a cast. The information and exercises provided will help to prevent the unaffected joints in your hand and arm from becoming stiff.

Why has my wrist been put in a forearm cast?

Your fractured (broken) wrist has been put into a cast to help hold the bone in place and allow it to heal. The cast will stay on for 2-4 weeks if you have had an operation to fix the bone or 6-8 weeks if the bone is in a good position and no operation is needed. Once this cast is removed your doctor will decide if you need referring to physiotherapy. Not everyone gets referred to physiotherapy. You may have a forearm cast for other types of wrist and hand injuries and the length of time wearing the cast will be dependent upon the injury.

What should I do whilst my wrist is in the forearm cast?

- Keep your injured arm raised up with your hand above your elbow as much as possible
- Avoid standing or sitting with your hand down by your side. If you can you should place your affected hand on your opposite shoulder whenever you are standing. Whilst sitting or lying you can place your arm on several pillows to help reduce the swelling also
- It is common to have pain, especially at first, so your doctor can advise on appropriate medication.
- You should move all unaffected joints and exercises are shown later in this information sheet.
- You can use your affected arm for light activities only.

What should I NOT do whilst my wrist is in the forearm cast?

- **Do not** get your forearm cast wet. When washing or bathing keep it out of the water. You may cover it with a bag sealed with tape but do not put it under the water. Alternatively you could buy a limbo lining by following this link: www.limboproducts.co.uk
- **Do not** cut your forearm cast – always phone where you had your cast put on if it needs altering to seek advice
- **Do not** poke anything down the forearm cast as you may cut your skin and cause a wound, which may become infected
- We advise you **NOT** to drive whilst you are wearing your cast as you will not be able to have full control of your car and your insurance will be invalidated.

Please return to A&E if you are affected by any of the following:

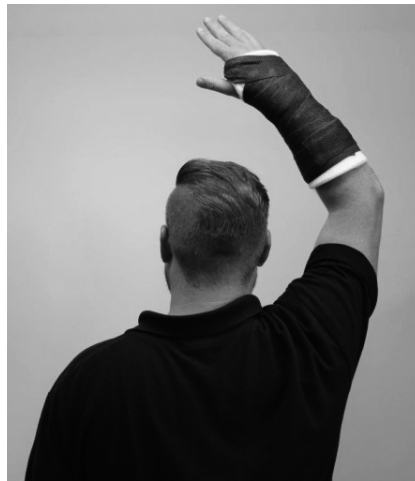
- Your skin or nail colour changes to blue or purple or your fingers become unusually cold
- You develop a burning sensation under the cast
- Your skin around your cast becomes red, sore or blistered
- Your fingers go numb and you are unable to move them or you get pins and needles
- You feel severe and persistent pain that painkillers are not helping
- Your cast cracks or becomes excessively tight or loose

How can I stop my arm and fingers from stiffening up?

These exercises are important and will make sure your unaffected joints do not become stiff. Please complete each exercise 5-10 times every 1-2 hours or little and often if possible.

Exercises

Shoulder – Make sure you can lift your arm above your head with your elbow straight and then lower again (if necessary help it with your other hand).



Shoulder – Touch the back of your neck with your affected hand



Shoulder – Touch the small of your back with your hand



Elbow – slowly bend your elbow so your hand moves towards your shoulder and then fully straighten your elbow



Fingers – try to get your fingers as straight as you can and try and follow the sequence below, holding each exercise for 5 seconds.



Fingers – Spread your fingers as wide as you can and then bring them in together.



Thumb – touch each fingertip with your thumb or as far as your splint will allow you to.



Who should I contact if I have any problems?

If you have any problems or any questions regarding your hand therapy please contact the hand therapy team on **01642 835595**.

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