



PHYSIOTHERAPY DEPARTMENT

DISTAL RADIUS FRACTURE WITH LOCKING PLATE FIXATION INFORMATION SHEET

Whilst supervised physiotherapy is important, it should be remembered that physiotherapists can only guide the rehabilitation, they cannot do the exercises for you.

Good motivation and mental attitude is a key component to rapid recovery and you have a very important contribution to make to the success of your surgery.

Rehabilitation needs to take a smooth and structured path. Erratic exercises can lead to the return of pain and swelling and be counter-productive.

The procedure

You have had your wrist fracture secured with a Locking Plate. This type of plate is very firmly held into the bone fragments and allows you to move your wrist joints without fear of the fragments moving. This is a great advantage to you as it means you will regain your range of movement much more quickly than you would be able to if you had been put into a plaster for 6 weeks.

Fracture healing

Following a fracture your body produces a substance called callus to fill the gap between the bone fragments. Over the weeks and months this callus is replaced by proper bone and the broken part of the wrist is remodelled to get rid of any bumps which may have occurred. This remodelling carries on for 2 years, but you will be back to your normal self well before this.

It usually takes about 3 weeks for the fragments of bone to be stuck together and another 3 weeks for them to be so solidly stuck together that we pronounce the fracture healed. At 12 weeks post injury the healed fracture is really quite strong and able to withstand normal activities including returning to the gym. However, it is probably sensible to refrain from contact sports, such as Rugby, until 6 months post injury.

Elevation

Following your surgery you will have been asked to elevate your hand above the level of your heart for the first week. This is important as it minimises the swelling that occurs after injury and surgery. Minimising the swelling also minimises the stiffness of the wrist and fingers and reduces pain. You may have been given a sling to wear. This helps with elevation of the hand and offers some protection when you are out and about. Remember to take your arm out of the sling and stretch your arm out to the side and up in the air, to avoid developing a stiff elbow or shoulder.

Wrist brace

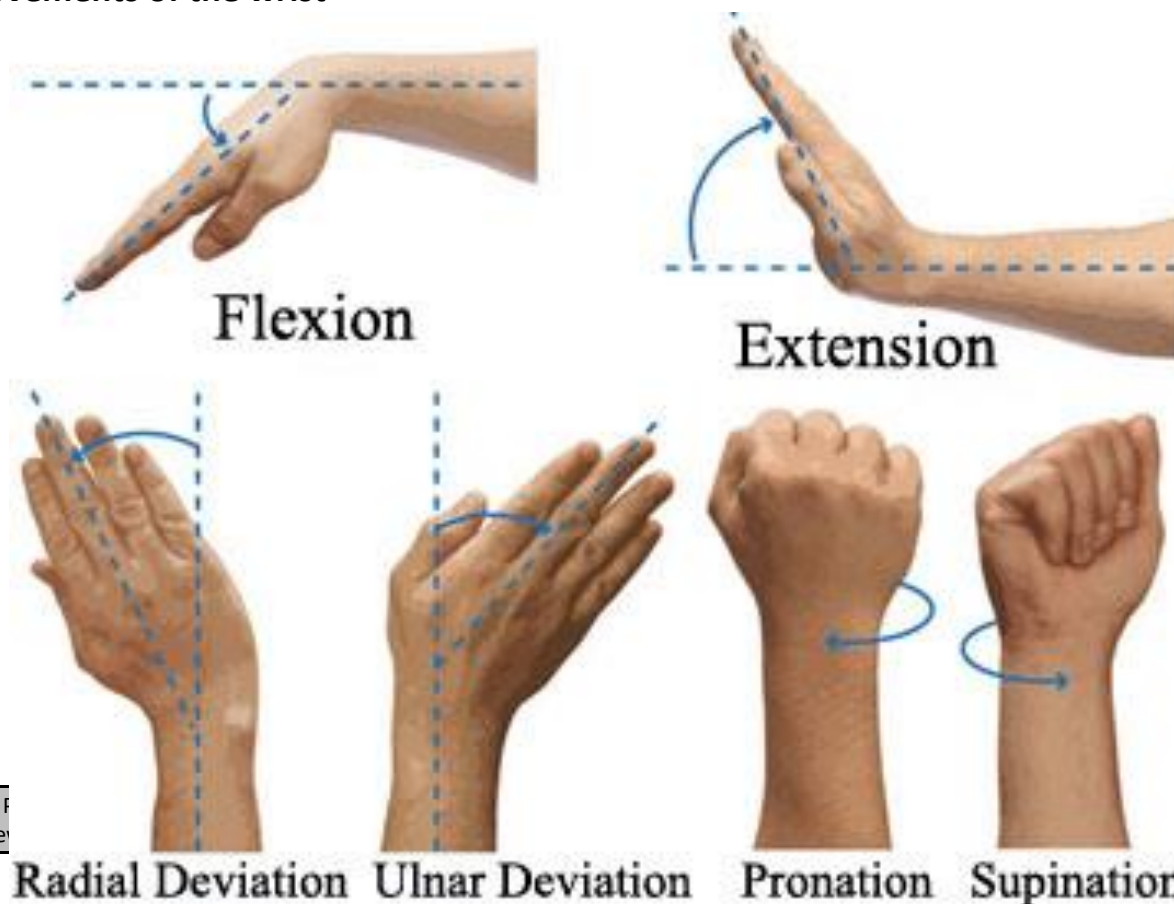
You may be given a soft wrist brace or have a rigid plastic wrist brace made for you. The wrist brace is to offer some protection and support, to allow you to use your hand freely. It is removed for washing and for exercising and when performing light activities such as typing.

Exercising

Your physiotherapist will run through your exercises with you. These are designed to help you regain your range of movement. They also improve circulation to the wrist and encourage healing of the fracture and of the ligaments surrounding the damaged bones.

Exercises are firstly carried out by you, using your own muscle power. These are called “active” exercises. Later you will be able to apply pressure to the hand to give a gentle stretch to increase range. Later still you will be given strengthening exercises for the hand and wrist.

Movements of the wrist



ADVICE:

Returning to Sport and the Gym

It is safe to return to the gym for lower limb exercising as soon as you are comfortable to do so. Wear your wrist brace to support your wrist when running etc. Try not to fall over! You will be able to start using light weights at about 8 – 10 weeks post surgery, depending on how comfortable you feel. You will be able to start light weight bearing through the wrist, for instance for yoga, at about 10 weeks. Be guided by how your wrist feels. It is sensible to refrain from playing contact sports, such as Rugby until you know you can land on your outstretched hand without pain. Sports where there is sudden resistive contact, such as tennis, or golf may be uncomfortable if started too early. Hitting a few balls against a wall, or a visit to the driving range may help you decide when you are ready to resume these sports.

Driving

Speak to Mr Elvey with regard to the safe time to start driving again. You must be confident that you have full control of the car, before you start.

Ice

Ice plays an important role in recovery after injury or surgery. Start applying ice as soon as possible, especially after exercising. Ice helps to decrease swelling and inflammation and can have a pain killing effect. Swelling can last for up to 6 weeks, as can subsequent bruising, all of which is normal post-op.

Apply an ice pack (a packet of frozen peas or crushed ice) to the front or back of the wrist. Please follow these guidelines carefully.

Ice Procedure

- Use crushed ice or ice cubes in a plastic bag or frozen peas in a plastic bag.
- Place the bag in a pillow case before placing across the wrist.
- Only leave in one spot for 10 minutes. The bag of ice can be moved from area to area for a maximum of 10 minutes per area.

If you require further information or need assistance with the above matter, or have any other concerns, please do not hesitate to phone the Physiotherapy Department on 020 8901 5571 or email Rachel.MACCABEE@spirehealthcare.com.