

Patient Information Sheet: Wrist Arthritis

What Is Wrist Arthritis?

Wrist arthritis occurs when the smooth cartilage that cushions the bones in the wrist joint wears down or becomes damaged. This causes the bones to rub against each other, leading to pain, stiffness, and reduced movement. It can affect one or both wrists.

The most common types are:

- Osteoarthritis: "Wear and tear" arthritis, often due to age or old injuries.
- Rheumatoid arthritis: An autoimmune condition that causes joint inflammation.
- Post-traumatic arthritis: Develops after a fracture, sprain, or other wrist injury.

Common Symptoms

- Pain in the wrist, especially during movement or gripping
- Stiffness and reduced range of motion
- Swelling and tenderness around the joint
- Clicking, grinding, or a feeling of instability
- Weakness or difficulty performing daily tasks

Diagnosis

Your doctor will examine your wrist and ask about your symptoms and medical history.

Investigations may include:

- X-rays to check for joint space narrowing or bone changes
- MRI or ultrasound to assess cartilage and soft tissues
- Blood tests if rheumatoid arthritis is suspected

Treatment Options

1. Non-Surgical Management

- Rest and activity modification: Avoid activities that worsen symptoms.
- Splints or braces: Support the wrist and reduce strain.
- Medications:
 - Pain relievers (e.g., paracetamol, ibuprofen)
 - Anti-inflammatory drugs
 - Steroid injections for flare-ups
- Physiotherapy: Exercises to maintain flexibility and strength.
- Heat or cold therapy: Helps ease pain and stiffness.

2. Surgical Treatment

If pain and stiffness remain severe despite other measures, options may include:

- Arthroscopy: Cleaning out damaged tissue.

- Partial wrist fusion: Stabilizes the wrist while preserving some movement.
- Total wrist fusion or replacement: Used in advanced arthritis cases.

When to Seek Medical Advice

Contact your doctor if you experience:

- Persistent or worsening wrist pain
- Severe swelling, redness, or warmth
- Loss of hand function or grip strength
- Pain unrelieved by medication or splinting

Please Contact Us for further advice: info@basinghandclinic.co.uk